ピアノの森 14

一色まこと

モーニング KC 1610

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一色まこと

講談社

9784063726107

雑誌 42667-10

ISBN978-4-06-372610-7

C9979 ¥514E (0)

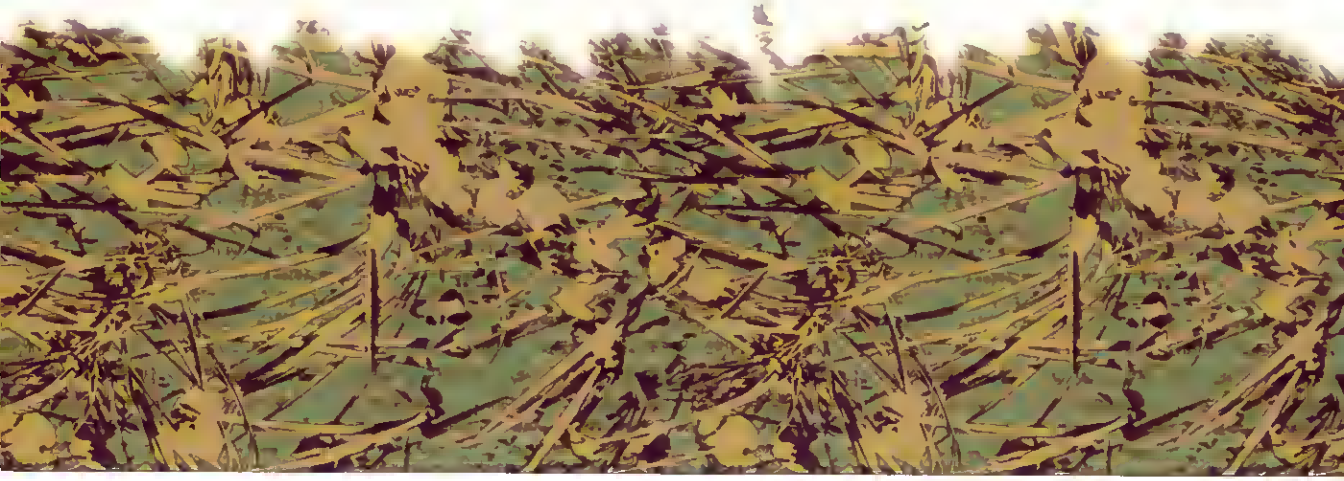
1929979005146

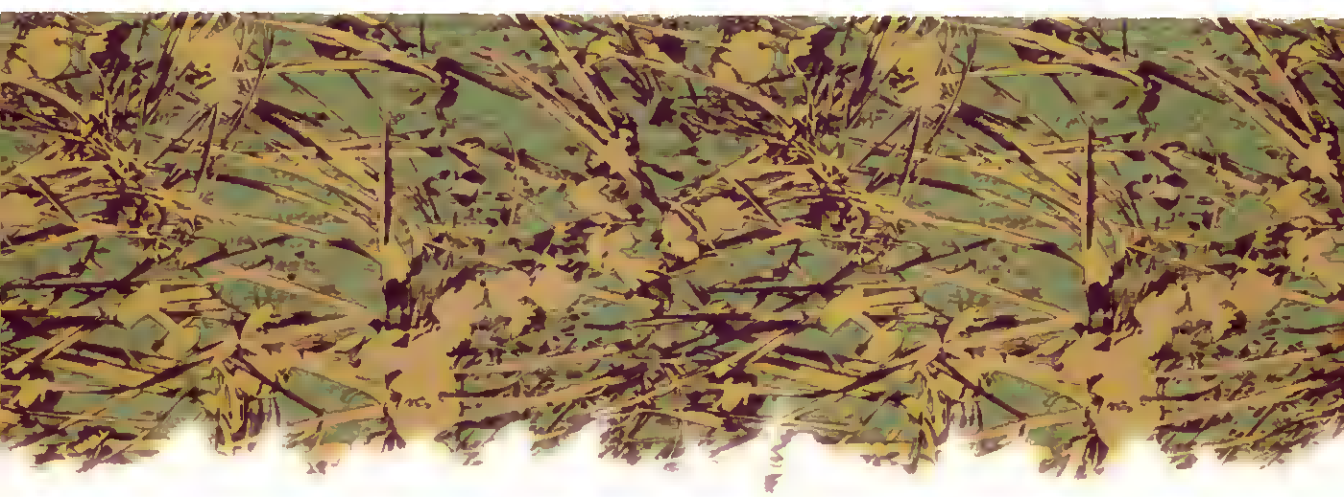
モーニングKC　講談社

定価：本体514円(税別)

The Perfect World of KAI

cover design KAKEI GRAPHICS





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ISSHIKI Makoto

The Perfect World of KAI

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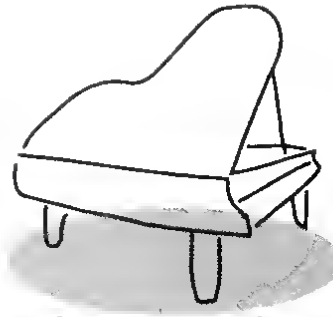

The Perfect World of KAI

14

CONTENTS

Chapter 119	JanuSZ is Jan	03
Chapter 120	The night on the first day of the competition	29
Chapter 121	The deadline of the combination	45
Chapter 122	Things that can only be said here	63
Chapter 123	The truth of the Rumors	87
Chapter 124	Star	111
Chapter 125	Contestant No. 2, Amamiya Shuhei	135
Chapter 126	Nocturne	157
Chapter 127	What are you saying?	185
Chapter 128	Darkness	199

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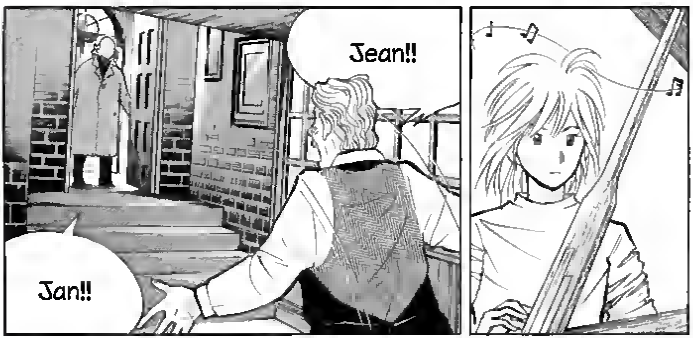
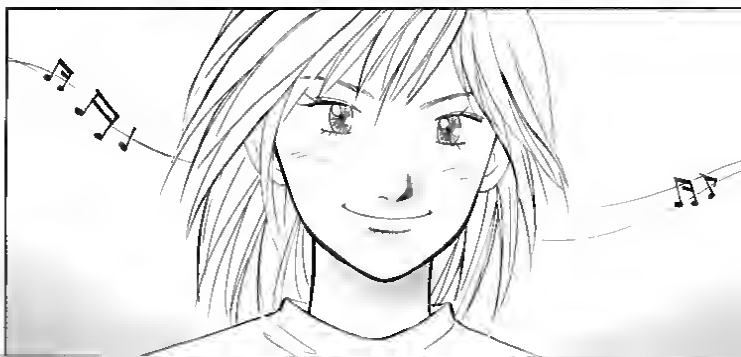
Chapter 119
Janusz is Jan

JEAN..?!
Hi!


Jean!!
Jan!!



How am I, this fellow asks..
How are you, Jan?

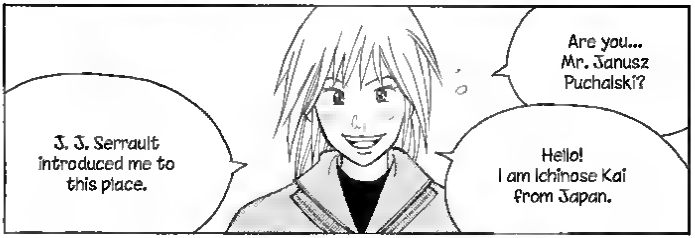
Haha... Im sorry.
I didn t hear from you for over ten years, but you suddenly pushed that lad onto me

Talk about hardworking! I ve never seen such an amazing kid

Still, Kai is a very hard worker, isn t he?

Every single day...
I remember what happened a month ago, when Kai first came ta this bar.
Jan, thank you so much!
For agreeing ta take in Kai...
I should be the one thanking you, Jean.
NASTROJ
He did say that a piano-shaped signboard should be on the wall...
Is this really it...?

Go home, go home!
There's no beer for customers here!!
Got any complaints?
Yes, this is NASTROJ.


J. J. Serrault introduced me to this place.
Are you... Mr. Janusz Puchalski?
Hello! I am Ichinose Kai from Japan.

Ah...he has a letter for you.
Did something happen to Jean?
Rustle

Huh...? What's with that terrible Polish...

THUMP
THUMP
Letter...?
Hiccup
JEAN-JACQUES SERRAULT!!
JEAN, YOU SAY?!?!
Huh?
Nonsense! I haven't heard a word from him in ten years...
Then he comes along and says that as long as I let you practice piano, there's no need to pay you for working here part-time?!
AHAHAHA!

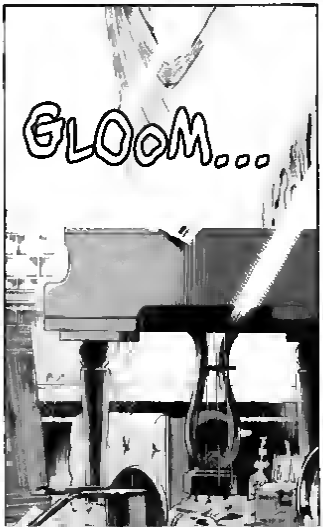
Idiot! He doesn't need to say that, since I don't have the money to hire any workers.
The store, me, and even the piano have all become old. I've closed up shop long ago

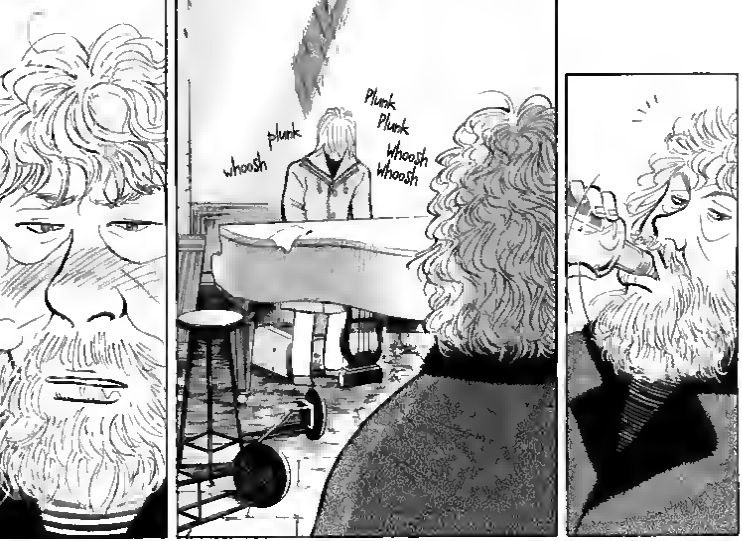
GRAB
All right, just see for yourself!
He seems to be grumbling about something... but I can't understand him at all.
I'm in trouble. I've only learned enough Polish up until when I pass him the letter

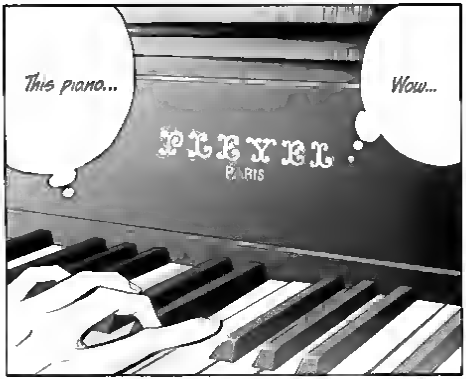
.....

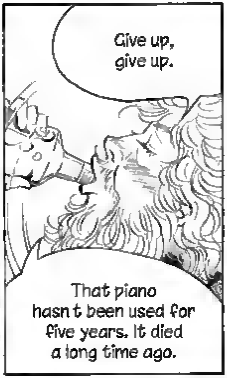
. . . . . .

Ha ha ha... told you!
It's such a pity.


GLOOM...





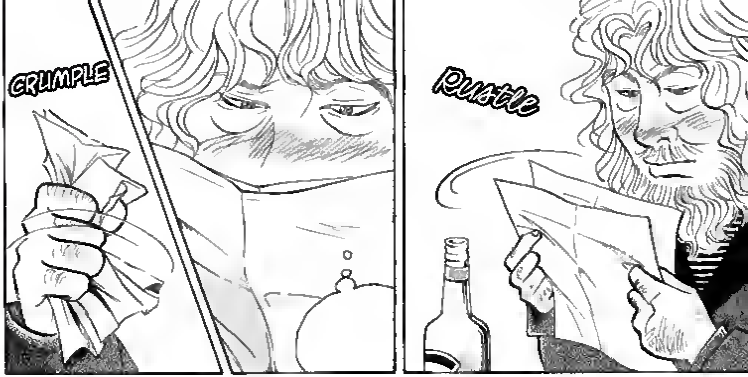


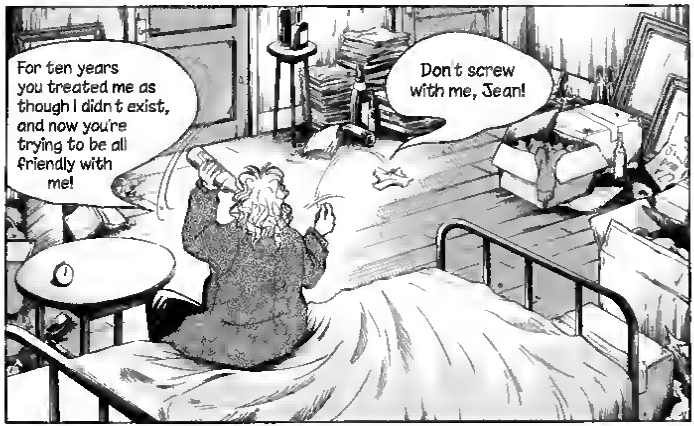
*1 PLEYEL = Pleyel et Cie, a French piano manufacturing firm. It is said that Chopin loved these pianos throughout his life.

I'll be lucky if at least the strings aren't broken...
Rustle
Jeez...
Can it be revived?

Second floor?
I'll be drinking on the second floor, so go home when you're satisfied.
Do whatever you want!
What're you complaining about, kid?!
I start drinking from the morning on- all twenty-four hours are at my leisure!

It's fine, so just hurry up and go home!
There's no need to say goodbye to me, and you don't need to worry about locking the doors either!
At any rate, don't bother me.
SFX: Stomp stomp
Damn it.
What's with him!
SFX: Whump
"I'm going to the second floor, so help yourself!"
Yeah, that must have been it!
...was that what he said?


CRUMPLE
Rustle

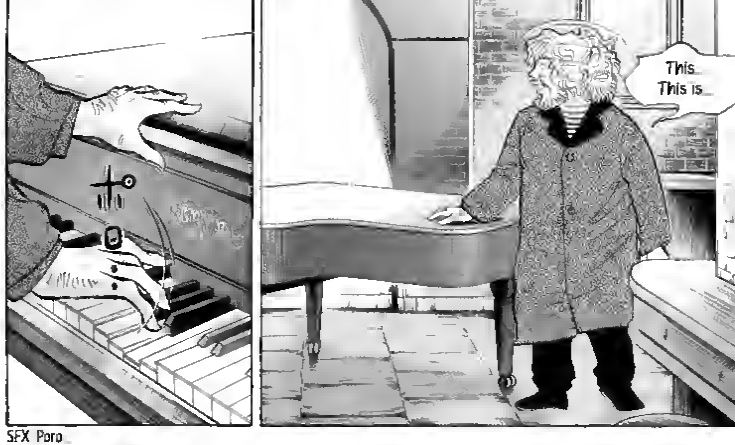

For ten years you treated me as though I didn't exist, and now you're trying to be all friendly with me!
Don't screw with me, Jean!

Sniff
Sniff

Speaking of which, this place stinks...
It's messy, too...

Clatter
Clatter
Clatter
Ugh... Ugh—
WHOAAA!
ガラガラガラ
SFX: Clatter Clatter Craaash!
SFX: Dash!
WHA...

S-SORRY!
THE TRASH FELL OVER...
SFX Bam
WHAT'S GOING ON?!
!?
TH-THIS... WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH IT?
What's that kid doing?
It's only one in the afternoon.
Could it be that he didn't go home last night...?
ドドド



SFX: Poro

SFX: Porororo

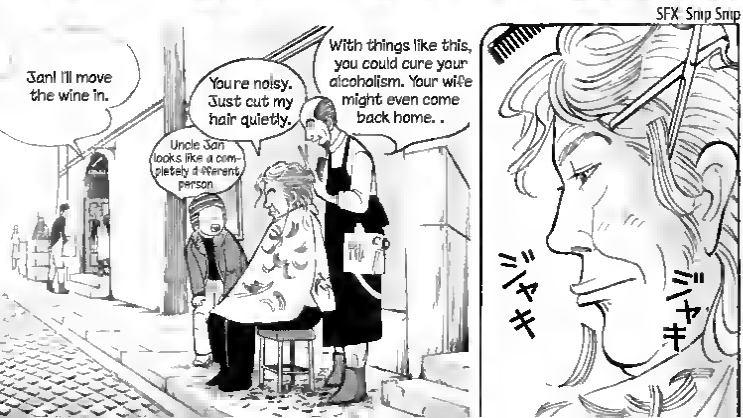
!
SFX: Rip rip
I... I can't understand what you're saying!
If you don't learn Polish properly, I won't hire you!
Aha... the signboard was hidden under the ivy
NAUKA
You're really hardworking.

Even if you ask me for your pay later on, I still won't give it to you.
I can't afford it.
Even though you've cleaned this place up, you can't feel out of place.
Clink
Pour...

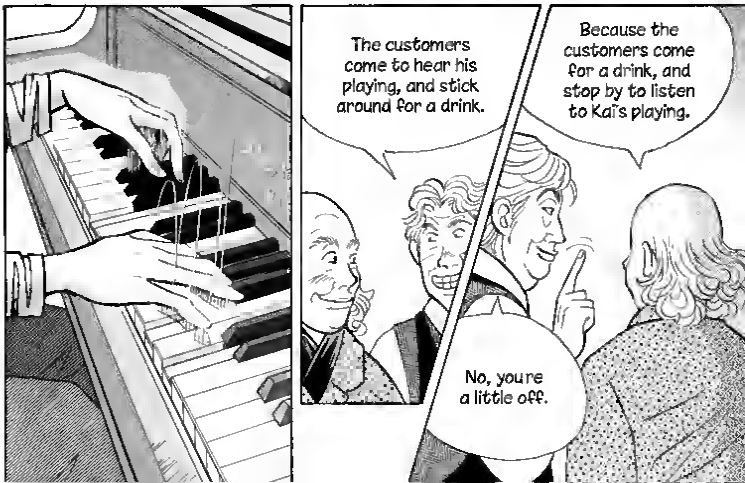
Turn
I... idiot! It's best to drink it straight from the bottle.
Really, outsiders don't know anything.
Look!
Since you can finish it in one gulp, pouring beer repeatedly is so troublesome.
Even if you play the piano for me, the beer won't become tastier.
Hm...not bad.

Is the bar... open?
Share a little beer with me then, pops.
N-no. There's no beer for customers.
I won't drink a lot, as long as I can hear the piano playing...
Ah...

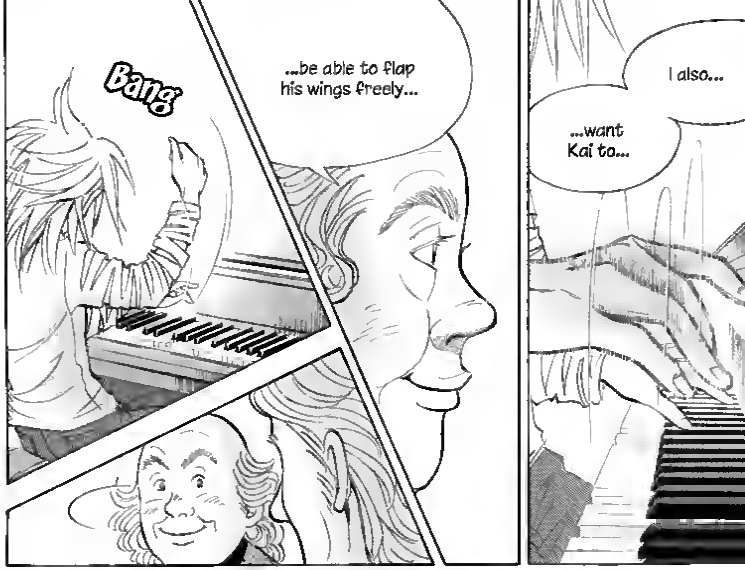
It's great, Uncle Jan...
The bars reopened...
ZYWIEC
It's really great.


SFX Snip Snip
Jan! I'll move the wine in.
You're noisy. Just cut my hair quietly.
With things like this, you could cure your alcoholism. Your wife might even come back home. .
Uncle Jan looks like a completely different person
ジャキ
ジャキ

Heh heh heh...
So just like that...
When I realized it, in less than a month there were already so many customers!


The customers come to hear his playing, and stick around for a drink.
Because the customers come for a drink, and stop by to listen to Kai's playing.
No, you're a little off.

Yeah... he won't stay here.
But...he won't go back to Japan either.
But after the competition ends, will Kai return to Japan?
That's what Kai's boss wants.
Huh?
??
If Kai stays in Japan, his chains will be too heavy.
?


Bang
...be able to flap his wings freely...
I also...
...want Kai to...

...and soar in the sky.
Janusz is Jan -END
SFX Bravo! Bravo!

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PIANO NO MORI

by ISSHIKI Makoto
一色まこと

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Chapter 120

The night on the first day of the competition

I really...
like listening to Kai playing the piano.

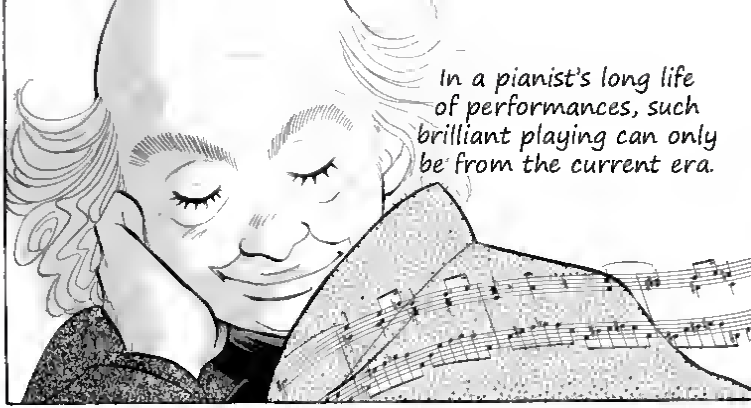
Especially on
nights like this...

NHASTSON

I like to take a nap while listening...

...to Kai's practices that aren't played for others to hear.

His playing....
...is youthful... and full of life...


In a pianist's long life of performances, such brilliant playing can only be from the current era.

It's unusually high-spirited.

But Kai's playing today...

Or should I say... intense...
Could he really be feeling stage fright...?

Maybe he was stimulated by someone's performance...
Or is it from the competition that started yesterday...
Since yesterday...
His playing...
Pa- pa- pa- pa...
La- la- la- la...

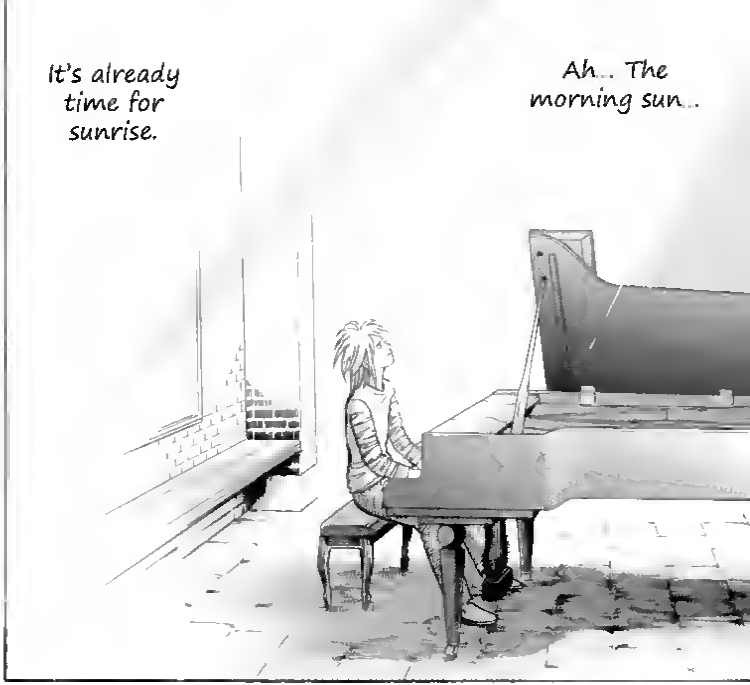
It's continuously bothered me, lingering in my mind.
Because the impact was too big, I couldn't stand up...
His playing...

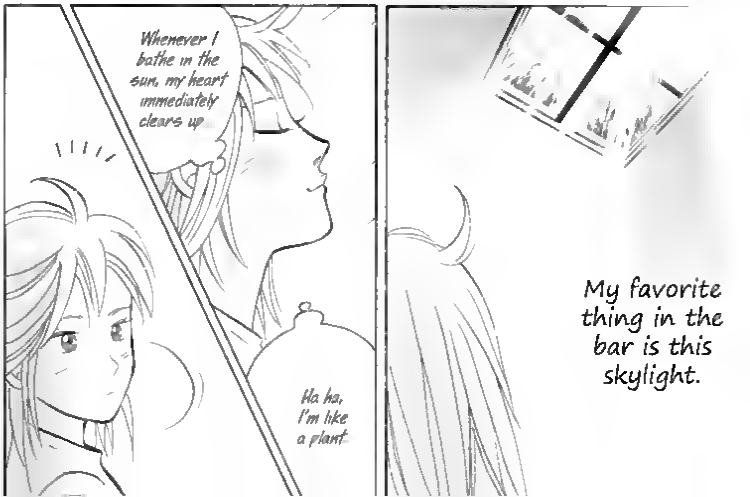
Creating a disturbance...
It's captured my mind..
—Dominating—

Wei Pang.
Wei Pang,
Wei Pang,
Wei Pang's sound is –?!

SFX: Bam!

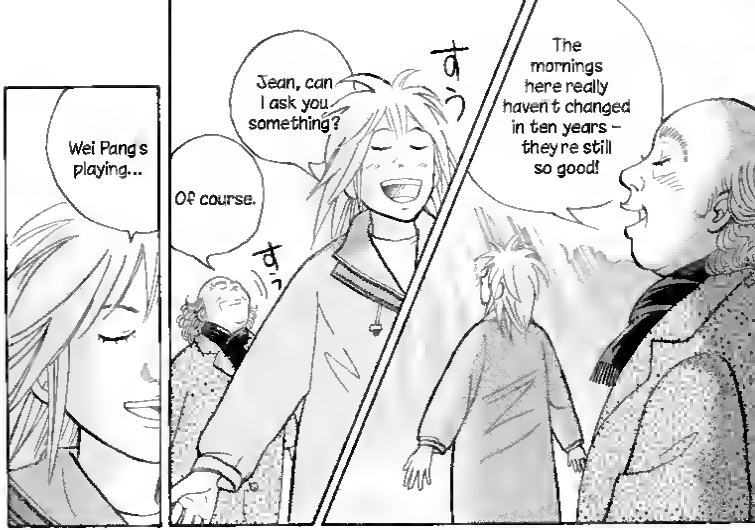
SFX: Shine


It's already time for sunrise.
Ah... The morning sun...


Whenever I bathe in the sun, my heart immediately clears up
Ha ha, I'm like a plant
My favorite thing in the bar is this skylight.

Hrm... umm.
Uncle Jean...
Jean...
I like it this way, because it feels luxurious.
No, it's fine.
Sorry, Jean. I was too immersed in playing...
And made you fall asleep...
I can make you some coffee!
...I say that, but it used to be Jean's place...
You can have a good rest at my apartment.
Let's go back.
Ha ha... that sounds great too.
First you tell me to sleep, and now you want me to drink coffee?

Wow!
It feels great!


Wei Pang's playing...
Jean, can I ask you something?
Of course.
すう
すう
The mornings here really haven't changed in ten years – they're still so good!

The night on the first day of the competition END

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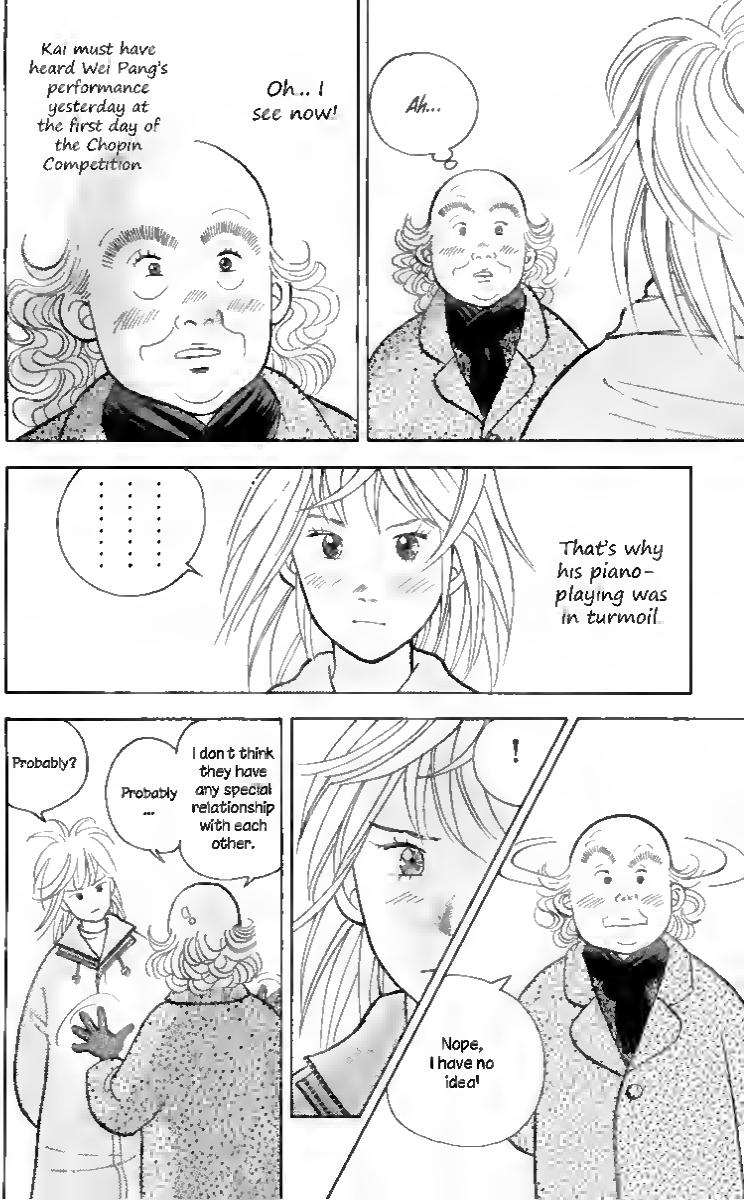
Chapter 121

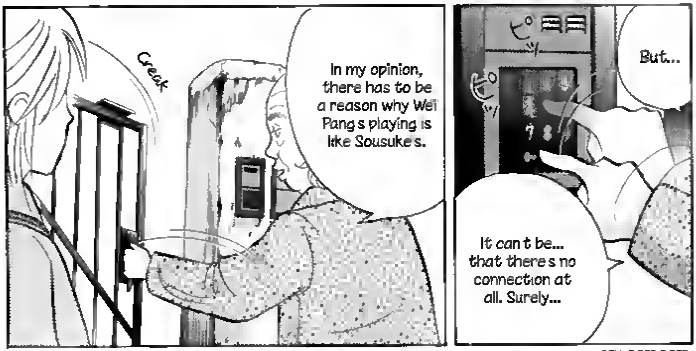
The deadline of the combination


Kai must have heard Wei Pang's performance yesterday at the first day of the Chopin Competition
Oh.. I see now!
Ah...
That's why his piano-playing was in turmoil
Probably?
Probably ...
I don't think they have any special relationship with each other.
!
Nope, I have no idea!

I think you must have said that because you actually knew something about him.
I can't believe that it turned out to be that kind of piano-playing.
Ah ha ha, I didn't know, I didn't!
...that no matter what, I had to listen to Wei Pang's performance on the first day!
But Uncle Jean, you said...
Man...I was shocked too when I first heard Wei Pang's performance at the Long-Thibaud.
NOTE REFERRING TO THE "LONG THIBAUD-CRESPIN INTERNATIONAL MUSIC COMPETITION.
I'm not exaggerating when I say that "stunned" is the only word that described my feelings then

It's like that.
So..
I thought that if Kai also felt the same, it would be very amusing...
It would have been such a waste if I was the only one who was stunned!
I was completely shocked.
Well, as you had expected, Uncle Jean...
Wei Pang and Sousuke truly do not have any special relationship.
After that, I asked people who knew about it, and investigated many things...
.....
He has no idea who Wei Pang is.
I even asked Sousuke himself...

Sousuke doesn't know Wei Pang...
Since Sousuke himself doesn't know a thing, of course I wouldn't know anything either.
Of course... you say...


Creak
In my opinion, there has to be a reason why Wei Pang's playing is like Sousuke's.
But...
It can't be... that there's no connection at all. Surely...

SFX. BEEP BEEP

How would he feel...?
He will definitely be shocked.
Wei Pang's playing as soon as possible.
In this case, I really want to let Sousuke hear...

Hearing Wei Pang's playing...
Ahaha, he might faint.
Ajino..

To hear the sound he had lost at close proximity.

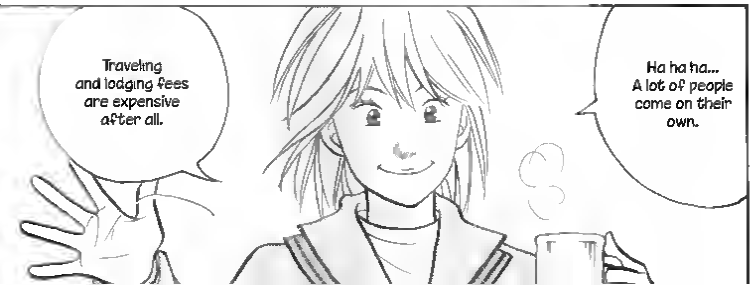
SFX TROT TROT TROT

Pant
Pant
Ha ha... You're on time every single morning.

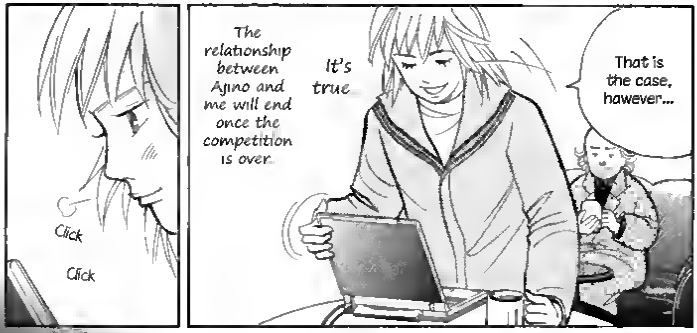
Maybe I can meet...
Aijino Sousuke himself...

Pour...
...so, when is Sousuke coming?
He'll be here soon.

It's so spiteful of him to send Kai to a foreign place on his own... good grief, that guy is so carefree.
What's taking him so long? Since he's coming over anyways, we could've traveled together.


Traveling and lodging fees are expensive after all.
Ha ha ha... A lot of people come on their own.

Once the competition ends, the combination between Ajino Sousuke and Ichinose Kai will disband!
But this competition is everything you two have been working towards...
Other people's problems aren't of any concern to us.

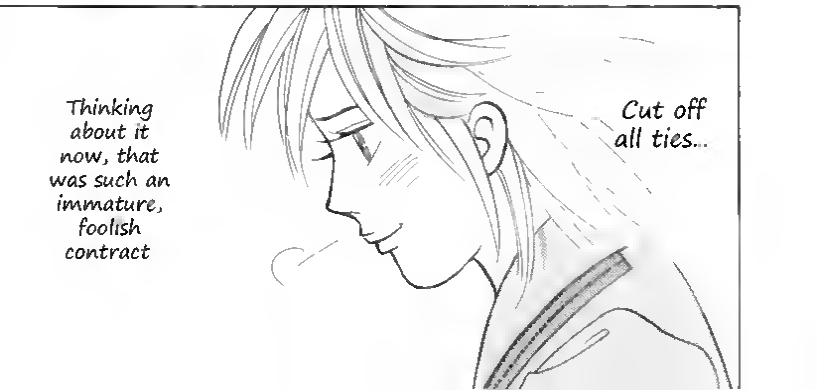

Click
Click
The relationship between Ajino and me will end once the competition is over.
It's true
That is the case, however...

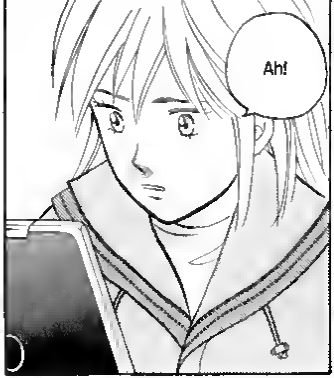
Ajino and I set this contract.
5 years ago...

I didn't want to owe him a favor...
I, as a young child...
Was unable to continue playing the piano without Ajino's help.
So, I forced him to make an agreement with me...
...to clearly establish a time limit for his guidance.
If that's the case, in five years...
When you turn 17, there'll be an event called the "Chopin Competition" in Warsaw...
You're going to participate in that competition!
That will be the deadline.

Well then...
When that competition ends, you will be able to rely on yourself.
Let's work hard for that goal!

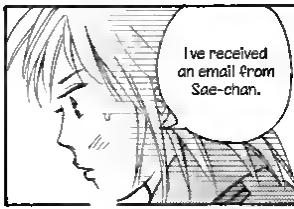
Because this is a contract between men!
After that, even if you miss me, you have to let me go!
STAY TRUE TO YOUR WORDS, AJINO!
STAY...
FIVE YEARS!
If it turns out like that, I will endure it.
Understood!

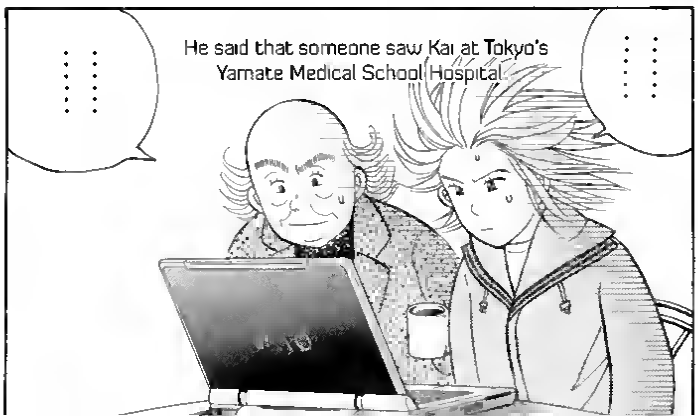

Thinking about it now, that was such an immature, foolish contract
Cut off all ties...



Ajino-sensei dropped by before leaving for War
so I asked him to bring back lots of stu

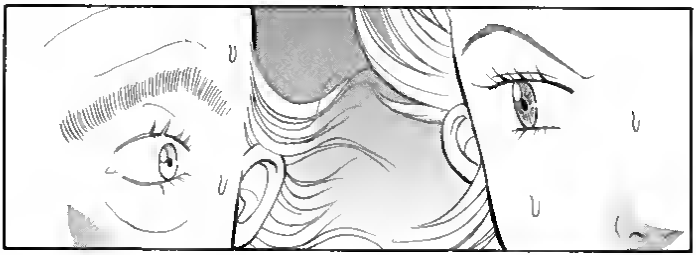
But then he asked... "Is Kai's 'hand' all right?

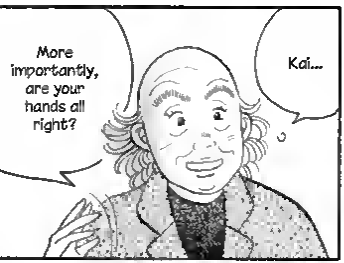


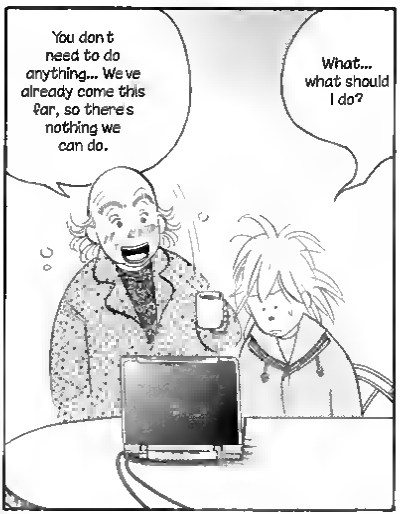


Although I'd already dismissed that idea of his,
I still feel that he is a little suspicious (>_<)

Kai...are you okay?







If that's the case, there shouldn't be a problem.
Yes, 100%!
...is whether your hands can safely receive the competition.
What Ajino's concerned about. .
So Kai, you just need to focus on the competition!
I will successfully resolve any misunder-standings.
Don't worry! Leave it to me!
That's all!

Today!
By the way, you said that Sousuke's coming soon... when is that?
Thank you, Jean!
That's great.
It's a trivial matter!
At this point, we're already accomplices.
What?
Though, I don't know the exact time.
So, "soon"... meant, today?!
Th-that's so rushed!
Ah ha ha...you were the one who just said that he should've come earlier...

The deadline of the combination END

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PIANO NO MORI

by ISSHIKI Makoto
一色まこと

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Piano no Mori ch 122

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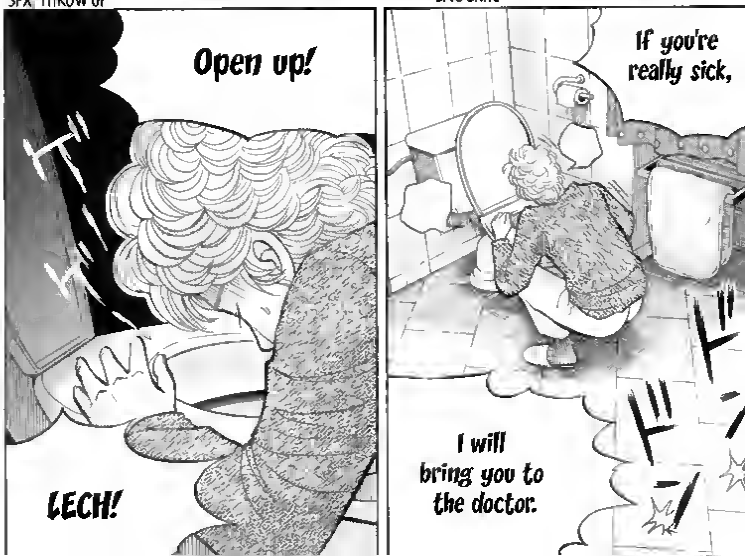
SFX: BANG BANG

SFX: THROW UP

SFX: BANG

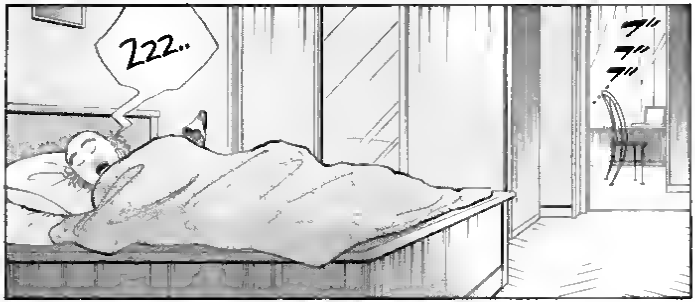
SFX: BANG



LECH!!
I... I understand, dad...
SFX: COUGH
Tomorrow are the preliminaries!! You know how important this is.
Do you understand? Lech!
SFX: RATTLE RATTLE
SFX: BANG

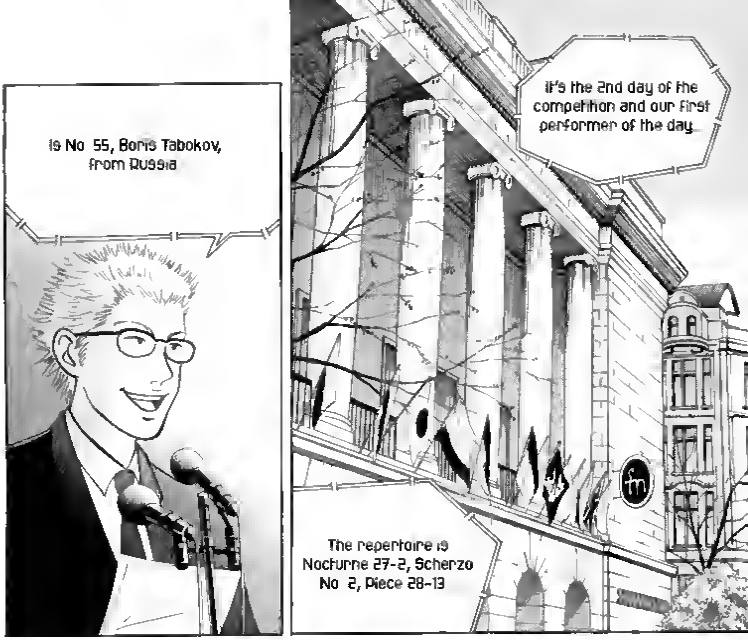
I understand, but I...
I feel as if I'm on the verge of dying

SFX BUZZ BUZZ.



SFX BUZZ BUZZ.

プルルル…
プルルル…
Hey, is he really planning to not come?
SFX. BEEP_ BEEP_
222…
ブブブ…
SFX. BUZZ_
Ah damn, it's starting
SFX. CLAP CLAP
SFX. CROWD

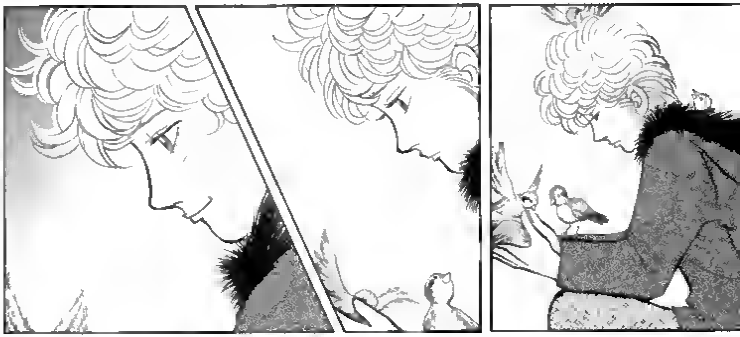

It's the 2nd day of the competition and our first performer of the day
Is No. 55, Boris Tabokov, from Russia
The repertoire is Nocturne 27-2, Scherzo No. 2, Piece 28-13

Eh? What's this?
On a Kawai piano nontheless!

He gave up?
How can it be...
Lech Szyman-owski...
54
Lech SZYMANOWSKI
Polska / Poland
Isn't this guy supposed to be the first performer of the day?

SFX: TWEET TWEET

SFX: CLAP CLAP

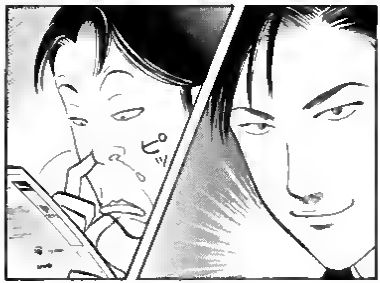


SFX. FIDDLE

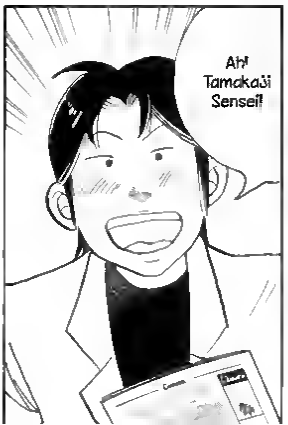
The number you have dialed is currently unavailable,
ポッポッポッポッ
Please leave a voice message

Kousei here, the afternoon section is going to start soon,
I've said this before but there's really no one special in the morning section,
Someone really good might perform later, though....
Anyway, just come here quick.
Ah!
Yesterday's report is out!
You definitely have to come!

Wei PANG

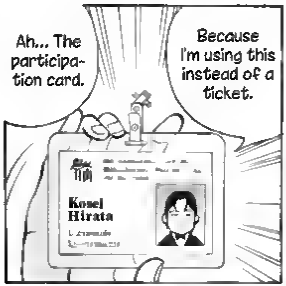


Heh..
All the attention is on Wei Pang, as expected..


Ah! Tamakaji Sensei!

Hi, Kousei! You're really here!

The night before the last; barely made it.
When did you arrive!?
I can't miss the first day of the competition.


Ah... The participation card.
Because I'm using this instead of a ticket.
Kosei Hirata

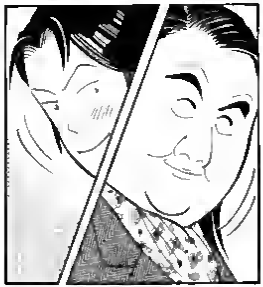
I usually sit on an empty seat or I just stand.
Eh? Where's your seat?

Speaking of which, it's a pity regarding your preliminaries.
Are you sure? I'm honoured!
My friend won't be coming today because he caught a cold.
Then sit next to me.

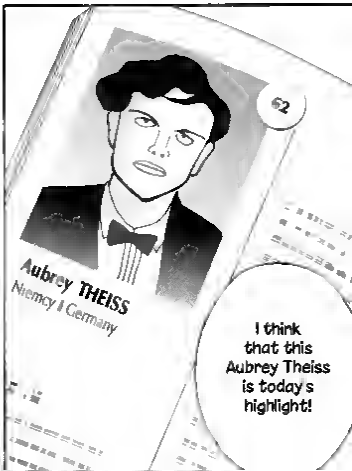
I'll aim for the next competition! I'm preparing myself for it by being a spectator this time.
Yup! I can't be depressed forever.

You're much more energetic now than the last time we spoke on the phone!
But I'm at ease,

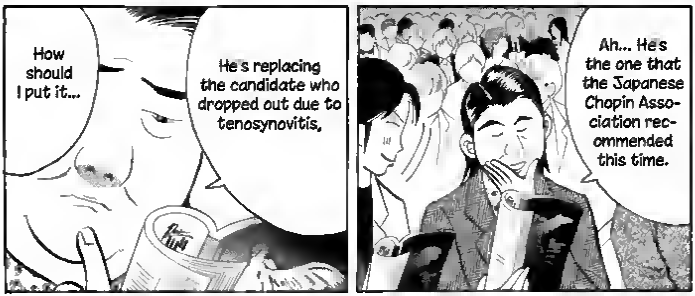
Eh? Germany?
Then, pay attention to the last performer for today, this guy from Germany!



Really?
I'm telling you this in confidence... I think his standard is above Wei Pang's.

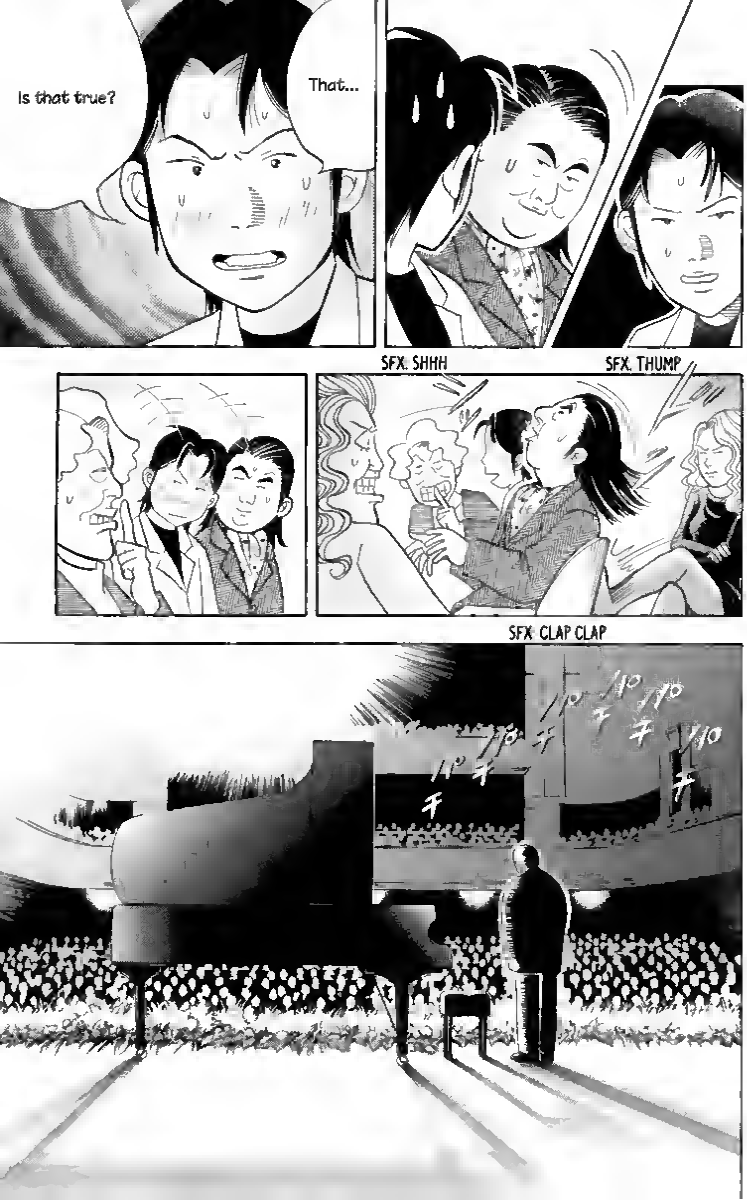

#2
Aubrey THEISS
Niemcy / Germany
I think that this Aubrey Theiss is today's highlight!

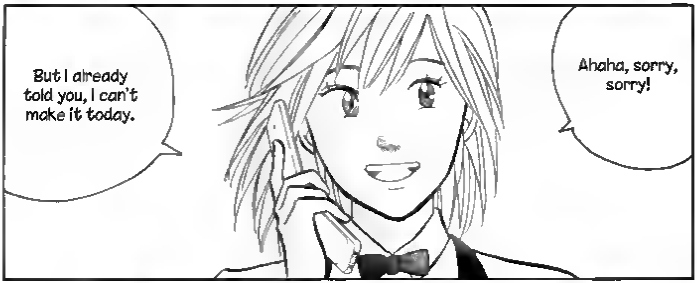
Sensei, what do you think about the Japanese performing this afternoon?
I'm slightly optimistic towards him...
Aubrey Theiss,
If even Sensei tells me so, I really have to pay attention to him.


He's replacing the candidate who dropped out due to tenosynovitis,
How should I put it...
Ah... He's the one that the Japanese Chopin Association recommended this time.

Damn, it's still Amamiya...
I see....
If we're talking about serious piano playing, Amamiya's son is much better.
His piano playing is too serious.

Even though I'm not very fond of him, out of all the Japanese, Amamiya Syuhei is at the top.
パチ パチ パチ パチ パチ パチ
SFX. CLAP CLAP
It seems as if there's a black horse among the Japanese candidates.
I've received unbelievable information.
Hey, I'll only tell this to you here,
What?
The 1st performer of the afternoon is...
No. 59, Akira Taitsuma, from Japan!
The repertoire is...
Black...
Black horse...?


Is that true?
That...
SFX: SHHH
SFX: THUMP
SFX: CLAP CLAP

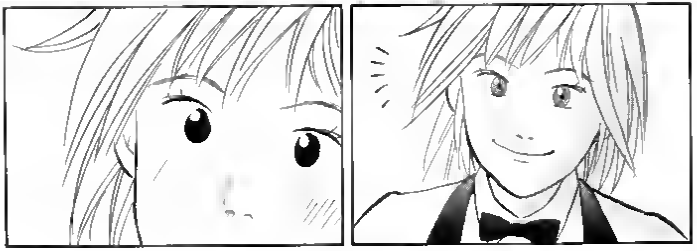


SFX BEEP~ BEEP~

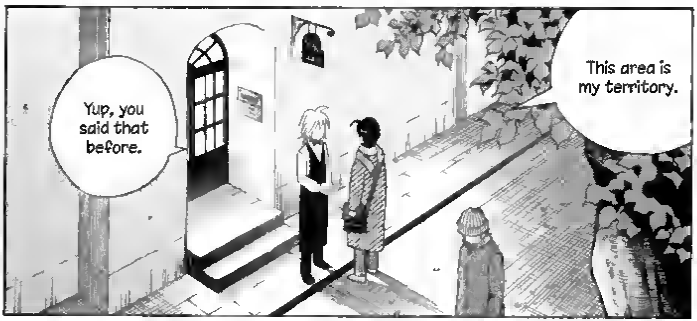
Tamakaji Sensei said...
I thought that it was going to be a guy, but it's actually a woman.
Tama kaji?
Didn't I say it before? He's my mentor, also a music critic
SFX BEEP BEEP BEEP
I understand, but...
I'm working now, and my phone's running out of battery...
Wait! I'm not done yet,
I haven't talked about the most important person, the black horse!

NASTRO1
See, the line got cut off.
キロキロッ
ピピピ
PAPAPA
PAPAPA
Bang!
RARARA
PARARARA

SFX APPLAUSE



As long as you say NASTROJ, towards the west, through the old townsquare, you can find it immediately.
I do.
You actually know about this place.

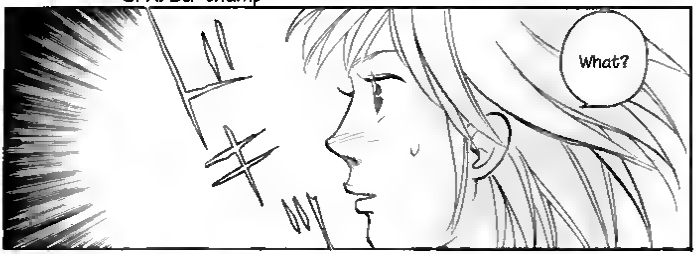

Yup, you said that before.
This area is my territory.

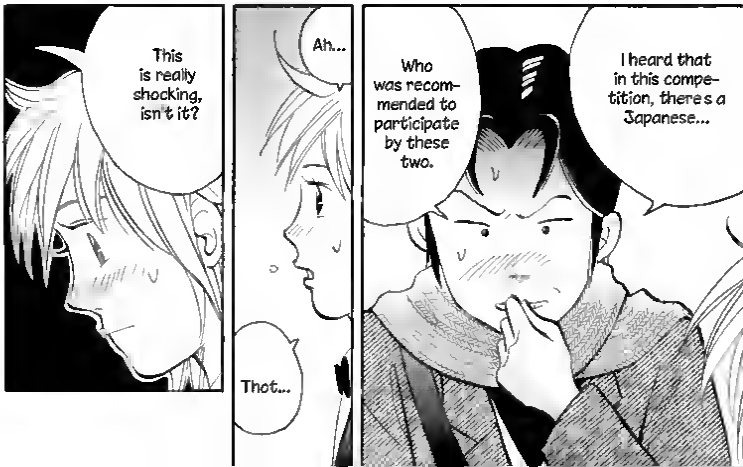
I just heard something unbelievable!
Idiot! Idiot! IDIOT!
I'm still working...
But I'm sorry! We'll talk later!

Anyway, you will be shocked when you hear about it.
Tama kaši?
Tamakaši sensei said...
This isn't the time to work part-time!
....
It seems like there's a very powerful 'black horse'.
カスカス
カスカス
This time, among the Japanese candidates...
SFX: WHISPER
Please, this is something that has to stay between us two.
Too loud.
BLACK HORSE!?

I think you should know, that famous pianist J.J. Serrault,
And, I don't think you know who he is, the gifted pianist who was titled Japan's Miracle 20 years ago, Ajino Sousuke...!

SFX: Ba-thump


What?


This is really shocking, isn't it?
Ah...
That...
Who was recommended to participate by these two.
I heard that in this competition, there's a Japanese...

You probably don't know this.... Those two people have history together...
If I were to tell you, it'll be a very long story...
SFX. CHATTER CHATTER
ガヤガヤ
あはは
Hahaha

Words that can only be said here END

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PIANO NO MORI

by ISSHIKI Makoto
一色まこと

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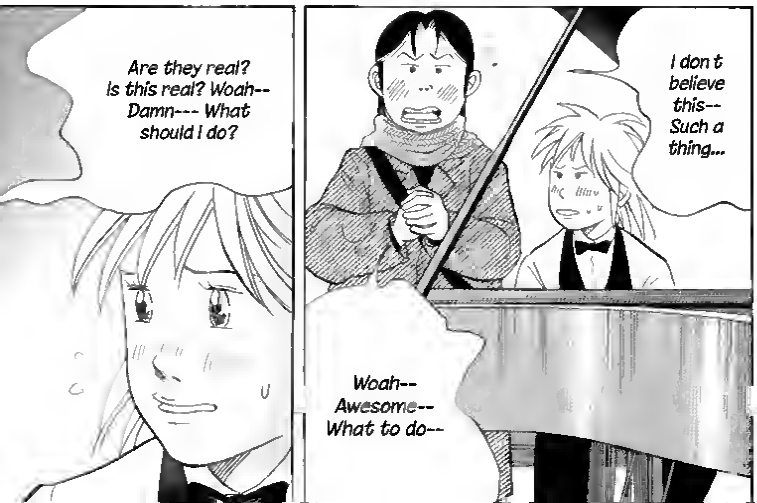
Chapter 123

The Truth behind the Rumors

Can't...
Be...
Can't...
It can't be...
true.

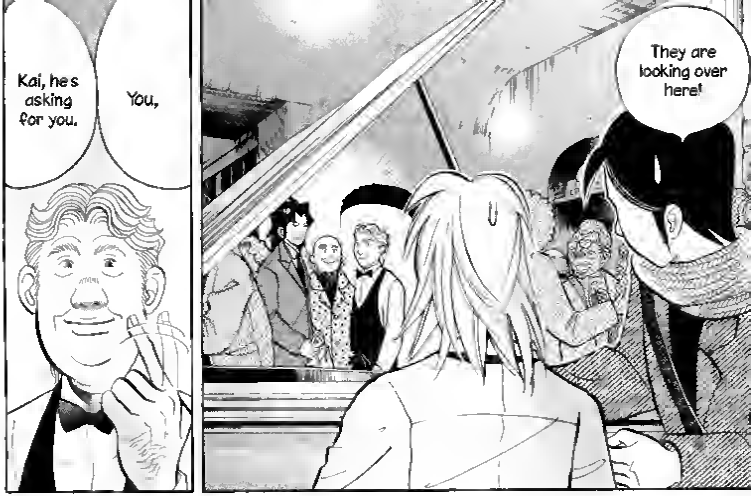
Kai, speak of the devil.
The two I was talking about just entered the shop.

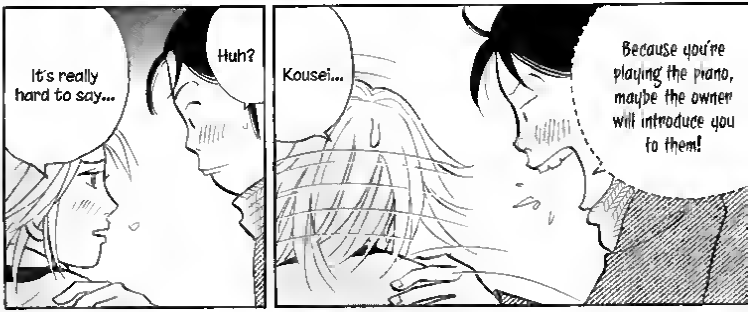
Kousei, actually...
Kou...


Are they real? Is this real? Woah-- Damn--- What should I do?
I don t believe this-- Such a thing...
Woah-- Awesome-- What to do--

He really does exist!
But...It's my first time seeing the real Ashino Sosuke! Amazing, he's an actual person.
It was really hard for me to meet J.J. Serrault with the exception of a few formal occasions....
For someone like you, who doesn't possess much knowledge about this kinda stuff, it really is an incredible thing!
Wow wow wow...
I'm different from you in this aspect, since I know a lot about this.
I'm really excited right now.
I have to calm down.
ドクン ドクン
Sorry! Please don't speak.
Kousei, actually...
SFX. THUMP THUMP

Kai, this bar is really awesome,
For both of them to appear together...
Ah-- If Tamakaji sensei was here too, he'd definitely feel the same way like I do..
H...how?
Who in the world is this bar's owner? Chatting with Serrault so casually.
Ah...Speaking of which, Serrault is closely associated with Poland....
Ah...
I heard that he once stayed in an apartment nearby.
Kou-sei...


Kai, he's asking for you.
You,
They are looking over here!


It's really hard to say...
Huh?
Kousei...
Because you're playing the piano, maybe the owner will introduce you to them!

No, Ajino...
Relax, you have me here.
What? Are you scared?

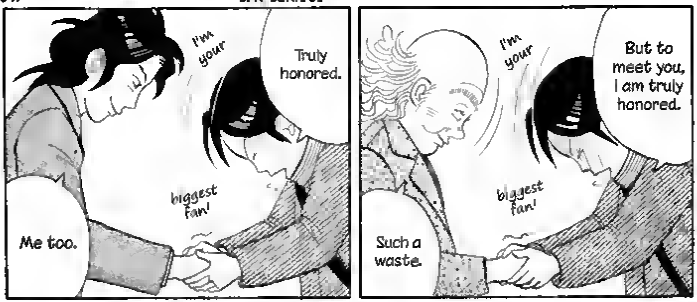
Huh?
What about Ajino Sosuke?
Ah...
Ajino is my sensei.
Ajino is Kai's sensei...?
Yup.
Awe...
REALLY!?
AWE-SOME!!!

Then, introduce me to them!
What's up! You should have said so earlier!
Okay...
Ah...
Ahaha... Why such a formal greeting.
Haha... Long time no see.
Long time no see.

I lost in the round of the preliminaries...
I am Hirata Kousei!
He's currently studying abroad in Poland, we met through this competition...
Ah, that... This is Hirata Kousei,

SFX: GLOW

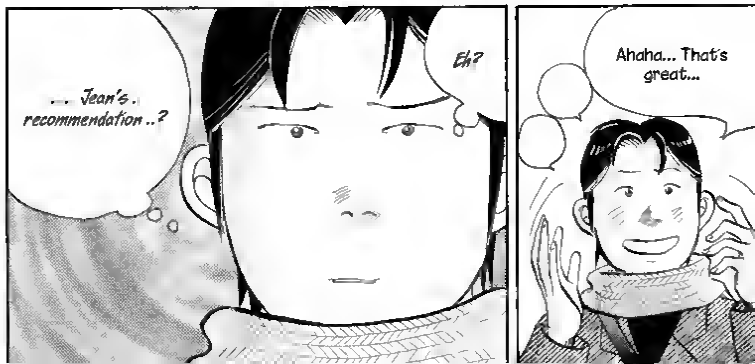
SFX: SERIOUS



I'm speaking to the world famous J.J Serrault right now... His Japanese is so fluent too..
Thank you for the kind words!
You'll have another chance next time.
Things like this, also depend on luck sometimes.

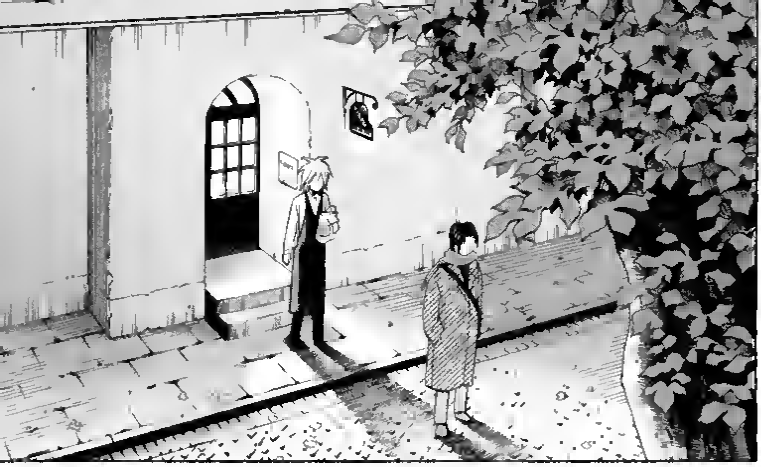
He says that he's currently studying here, and unfortunately only made it to the preliminaries in this competition.
Aha... It isn't really unfortunate.
What's he saying?
Ah...

Ahaha...
Ah... I hear that Kai barely passed too.
Luckily he did, as it would be a waste of Jean's recommendation if he didn't...
Polish is really too hard to learn...


... Jean's recommendation ..?
Eh?
Ahaha... That's great...

Sosuke brought a lot of stuff from Sae-chan.
Oh right, Kai!
Huh?
Wow... So heavy...
Because it's full of love.

Yes, of course!
I hope I'll have another chance to meet you!
Then, I will take my leave first.
Kou...
Bye.
Ah...
Kousei!



That's why you thought what I said was funny. That's also why you couldn't make sense of it.
It feels ...like betrayal.

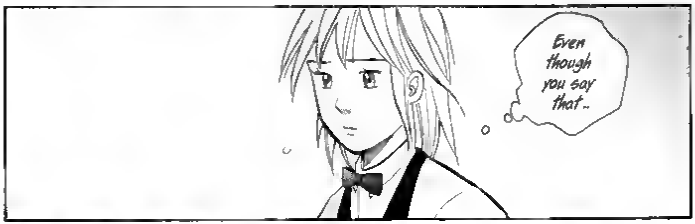
Who knew Kai would be the 'Black Horse ....

How is it betrayal...
You were talking non-stop, I had no chance to tell you.

First of all, I am not a black horse whatsoever,
Although I did get the recommendation from those two, it was just by chance..
Hmph! Say what you will.
But no matter what you say, the truth is that you kept it hidden from me....
It's as you say that i hid it from you... but it wasn't on purpose...
Who's Sae-chan?
Huh?
Ah...
Is she your girlfriend?
Ah... Yes.

...
ひょう
Correct!
Does that mean to stop being friends?
What?
Sorry, our relationship ends here.
Poor thing...
will be your greatest loss yet,
Without having me around,

Even..


Even though you say that..

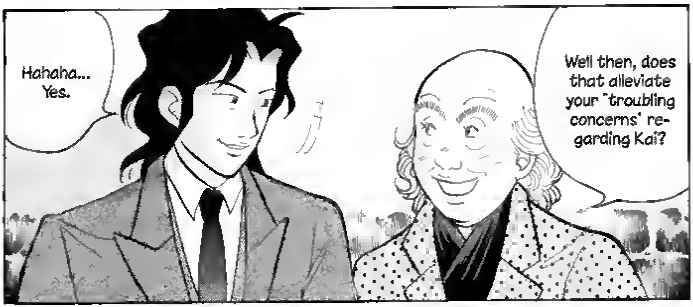
How am I supposed to tell Tanakaji Sensei about this.
Wahh, what to do!
.....
ドキドキ
SFX. THUMP THUMP

Is the black horse..
Ichinose Kai is the black horse. Ichinose Kai is the black horse... Ichinose Kai...

NASTROJ

What do you think about Kai's playing?

Seems like he didn't slack.

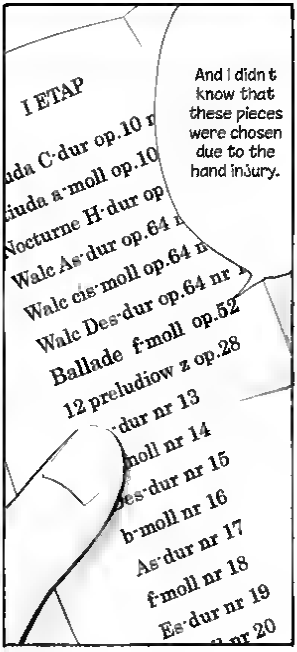

Hahaha... Yes.
Well then, does that alleviate your "troubling concerns" regarding Kai?

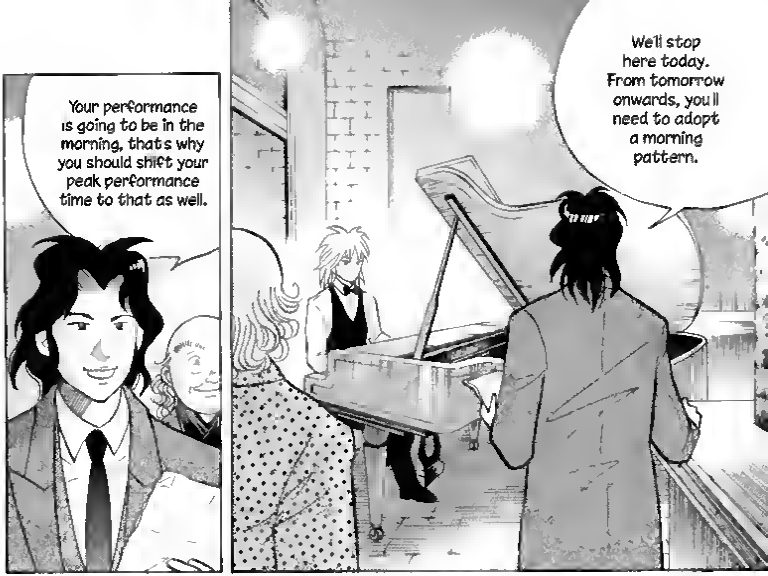
No no, I just so happened to mention it to Kai when he was on his way to Tokyo...
He even made you recommend him a hospital. I apologize on his behalf.
Who knew he would actually injure his fingers while doing a handstand, and all that without himself realizing it.

No,
While i was the plane, I calmly looked through Kai's performance list...
That's why I should be the one to apologize.
But I knew I could-n t let Kai keep the truth hidden from you any longer, just because he didn't want to worry you. it would've caused an even greater mis-understanding.

SFX rustle

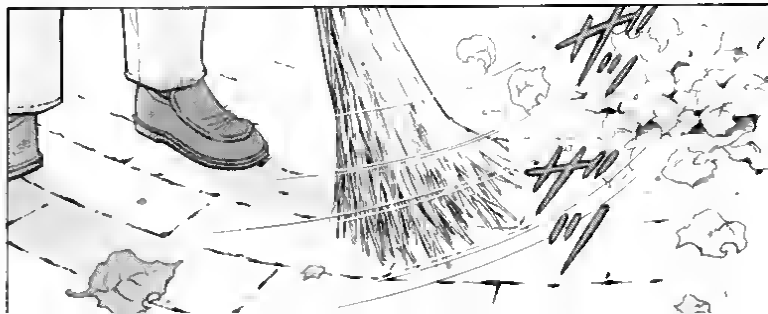
Then all is well!
But it's good to finally know the truth.


I ETAP
And I didn t know that these pieces were chosen due to the hand injury.
Ballade f-moll op.52
12 preludiow z op.28
Kai.

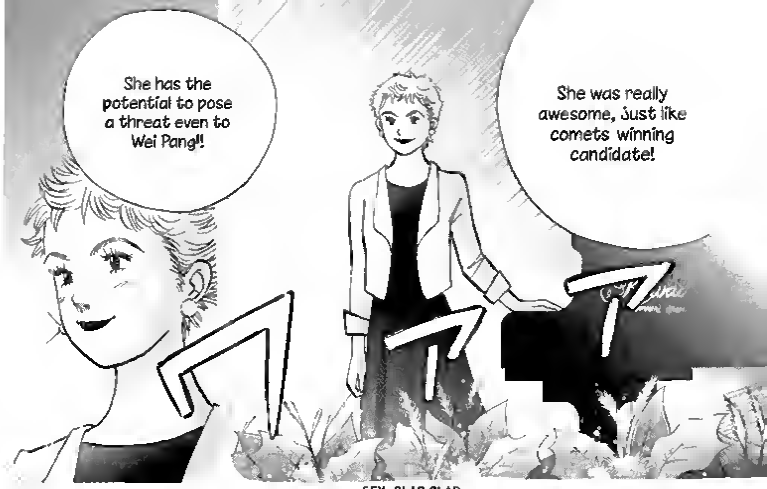

Your performance is going to be in the morning, that's why you should shift your peak performance time to that as well.
We'll stop here today. From tomorrow onwards, you'll need to adopt a morning pattern.

Yes sir.

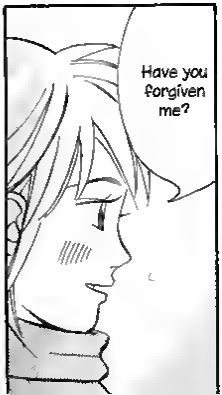
SFX SWEEP



On the 3rd day, there really wasn't any fellow worth watching.
It's already 3 days into the competition
Olesha Yushchenko from Ukraine performed really well...
...
But on the 4th day, yesterday...
Such occasions are exceedingly rare.
SFX: APPLAUSE
Not only the audience, even the judges gave a standing ovation!



SFX CLAP CLAP



I thought about it afterwards...
I felt that it wasn't your fault, after all....
What? Were you still thinking about that?
Tama-kaji?
I haven't even told Tamakaji sensei yet.
Also, I have a high tolerance for things like these...
Besides, it just won't do to have you messing up your competition because of me hurting your feelings.
Of course.
Yes!
You are definitely going to the venue today, right!?
I'm here just to pick you up.
Let's not talk about that, quickly get prepared!

The 5th
day of the 1st
preliminaries

Amamiya's
performing!!
The Truth behind the Rumors END

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by ISSHIKI Makoto
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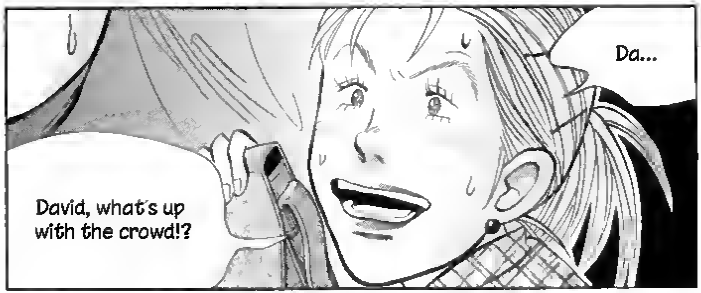
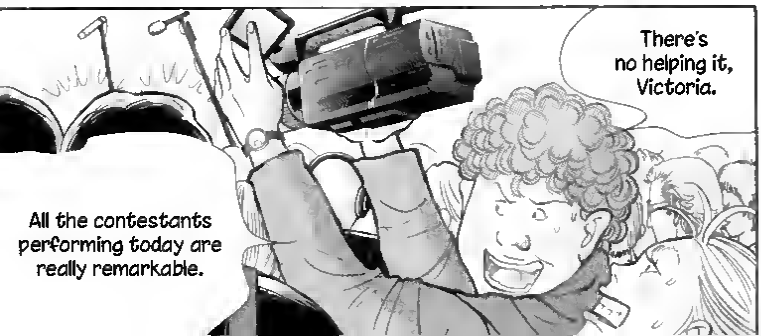
Chapter 124 Star





SFX CLICK CLICK FLASH FLASH
Sigh~ Amamiya is really unlucky,
To perform on the very same day as Adamski...

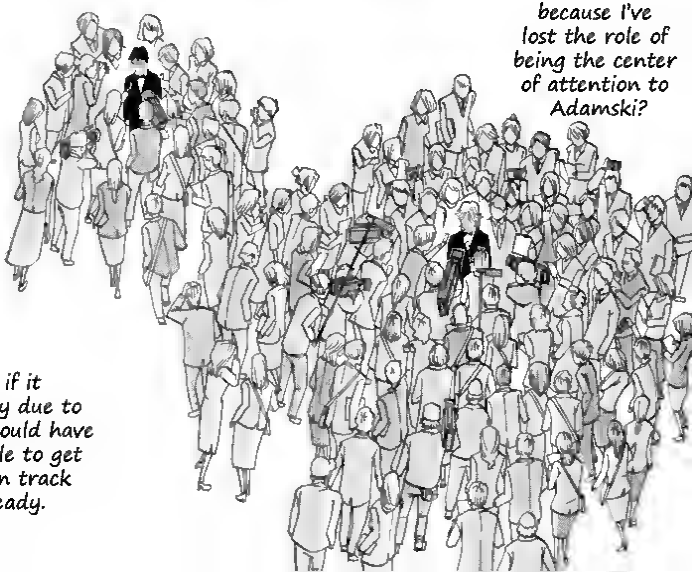
Carol Adamski,
Adamski... Where is he from?
Is the most popular pianist in Poland.
What's worse, he's performing right after that guy.
He began his first recital when he was 5 and was even praised as the reincarnation of the Polish music.
He frequently appears on the screen, and holds concerts all over Europe.

So not only does he want to gain reputation, but also a real victory eh?
What a greedy fellow.
He's already a star so famous that there's practically no need for him to enter this competition.
Look, Amamiya's celebrity status has finally caught up to him.
Even I feel sorry for him today.

What's the difference?
It's understandable if it's a concert, but to be harrassed like that right before a competition. I pity him.
In fact, it's good to have the opportunity to calm down.
I don't think so though.
So he is never going to be able to relax.
Either way the Japanese media won't go easy on him...
An...
Anxious.
Let's go Kai! We still need to grab our seats
...

I've been through something like this many times before...
Competitions

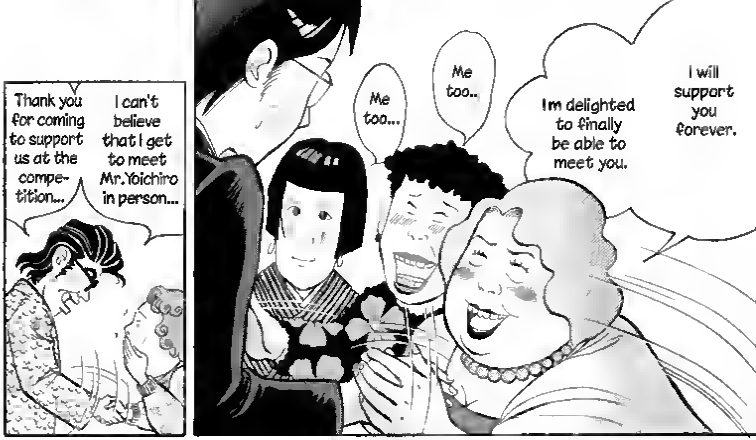
Why do I feel so anxious?
But why...


Is it because I've lost the role of being the center of attention to Adamski?
No, if it was only due to that, I would have been able to get back on track already.

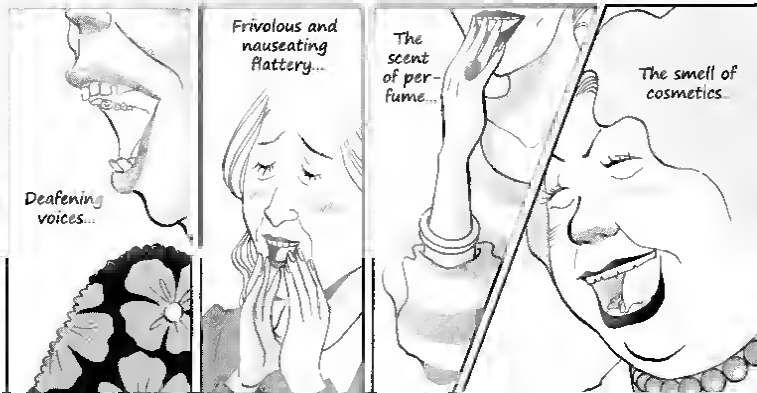
We will end the interview for now...
Dad...
Pardon me...
Would you like to comment on the fact that your son is the youngest competitor here today?
Ah... Mr. Amamiya.
We will set a day and time for interviews later. So please allow us to take our leaves for now.
Wow! Amamiya Yoichiro is here!
Are you okay?

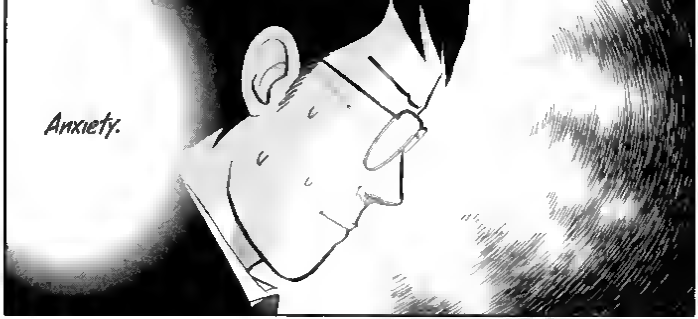
Yes, I'm fine.
Thank you for getting me away from the press.
There's still one more news group recording us, do you want me to get rid of them as well?
It's okay, I'm used to it.
Besides, they've promised to not enter the lounge...
Even if you're used to it, you shouldn't get so worked up.
The competition is the only thing that matters. You can always deal with the media later.
I know, don't worry!
Alright!
Then, do you want to meet your mother?
Yes!

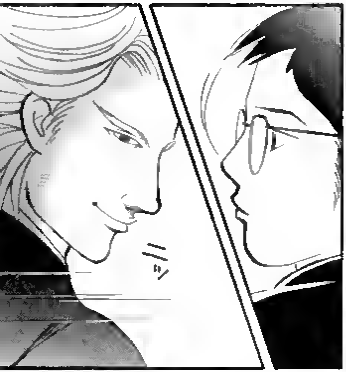
Wah, Shuhei <3
Didn't think that I'd see you before the performance!
They are part of a support group and have come to cheer for you...
Everyone wanted to say hi to Shuhei...
Oh right...
?


Thank you for coming to support us at the competition...
I can't believe that I get to meet Mr.Yoichiro in person...
Me too...
Me too...
I'm delighted to finally be able to meet you.
I will support you forever.

I Can't...
Can't take it anymore

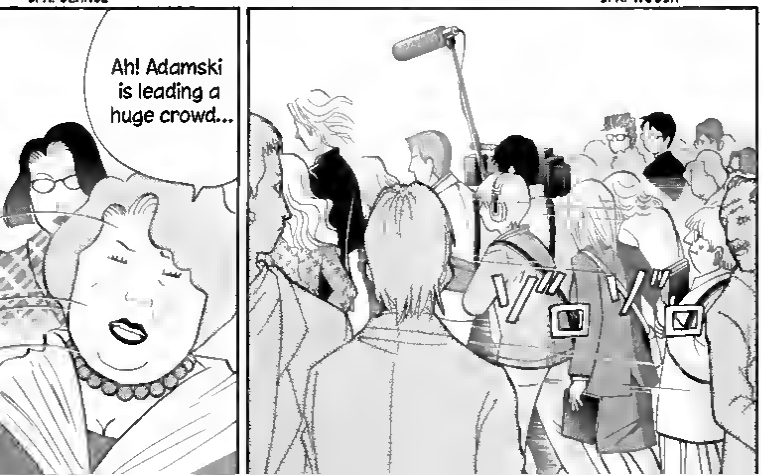

Deafening voices...
Frivolous and nauseating flattery...
The scent of perfume...
The smell of cosmetics...





SFX. GLANCE

SFX. WOOSH



Stop..
あはは...
Well, we will simply have to show them the strength of Aunties, we will be the better supporters than those who support Adamski.
My specialty lies in screaming like a young girl!
All these are making me..
Please stop!!
Sorry, please excuse me.
Quickly..
Quick .
Anxious.

Go some-where where no one can find me...
Eh!?
Eh...? Is this not the male bathroom...
Click
...?

A...
キィ
!
カチャ
カチャ
シャー
Adamski!
SFX. SPASH

?
You're also being harassed quite roughly eh?
You wouldn't mind if I lent that girl to you, would you?
...
That girl sure was convenient.
?
If you don't clean your hands thoroughly...
It might affect your performance.

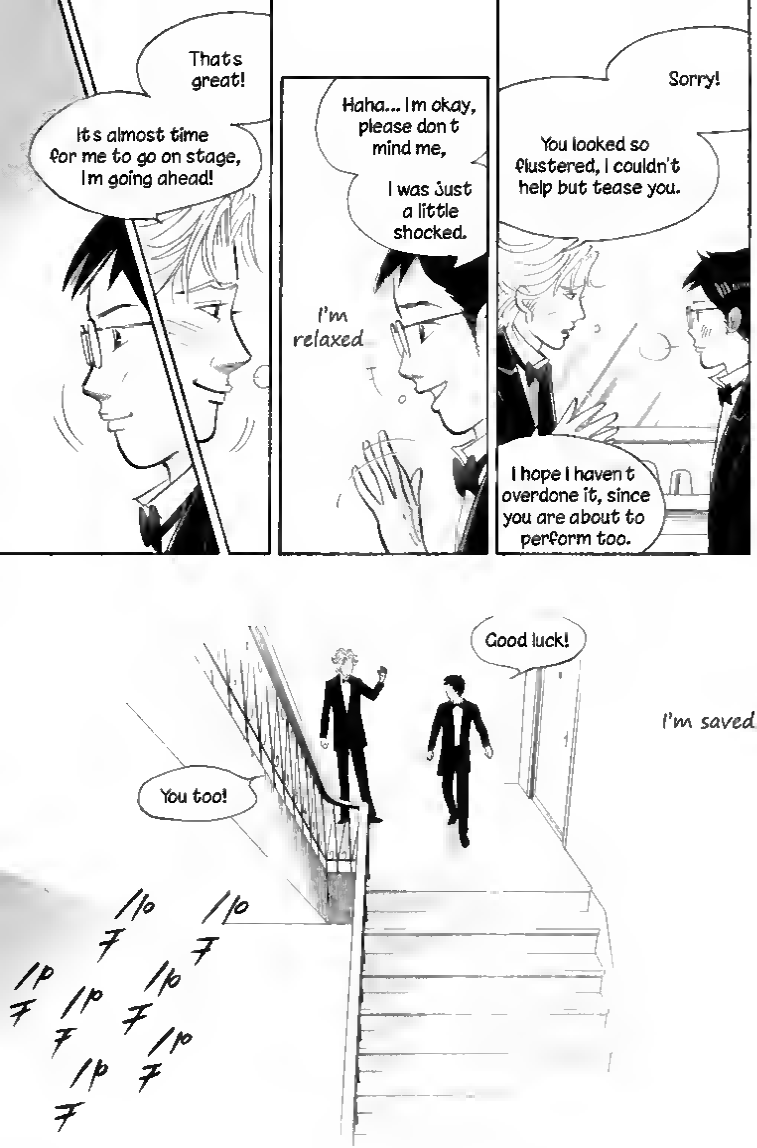
Ah, wait!

Excuse me.

Sorry! I was just joking.
Please don't get angry.

I had to look for a place,
away from everyone else...

That was my sister.
The zipper of my pants broke. She was just helping me sew it back up.


That's great!
It's almost time for me to go on stage, I'm going ahead!
Haha... I'm okay, please don't mind me,
I was just a little shocked.
I'm relaxed
Sorry!
You looked so flustered, I couldn't help but tease you.
I hope I haven't overdone it, since you are about to perform too.
Good luck!
You too!
I'm saved

No. 1, Carol Adamski,
from Poland!
Welcome to the 5th day of the first preliminaries! The first performer for today is..
SFX: CLAP CLAP
1
Etude in B minor Piece 25-10, Waltz in A-flat major Piece 34-1
SIGH
Then let us observe his ability!
The star is finally making his appearance!

SFX. CLAP CLAP
I'm sure the judges will notice all the slightest mistake he makes.
Tamakaji sensei once said that if the initial evaluations were too high, the judges will also have higher expectations, thus putting Adamski at a disadvantage.
Although I'm not sure if this will affect the judges' opinions....
How annoying, they'll go easy on Adamski if so...
Ah... That's possible too.
Kousei, you once told me that the judges often show more leniency towards the Polish contestants.
What if the performer is Polish?

With his breath-taking performance
Just like how well he was evaluated..
Carol Adamski.
SFX. CLAP CLAP CLAP
He truly showed the audience, the demeanor of a star.

The next performer is No. 2, Amamiya Shuhei.
From Japan!!
I think that..
However...
2
Compared to him, Amamiya is much...
The repertoire is Waltz No. 2 in B-flat minor Piece 31... Etude in A minor Piece 25-4... A minor Piece 25-11...
Piano used is Steinway & Sons.

パチパチパチパチパチパチパチパチ
SFX: CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP

Star END

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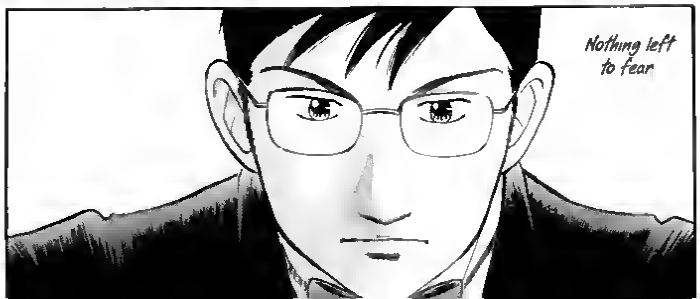
Chapter 125

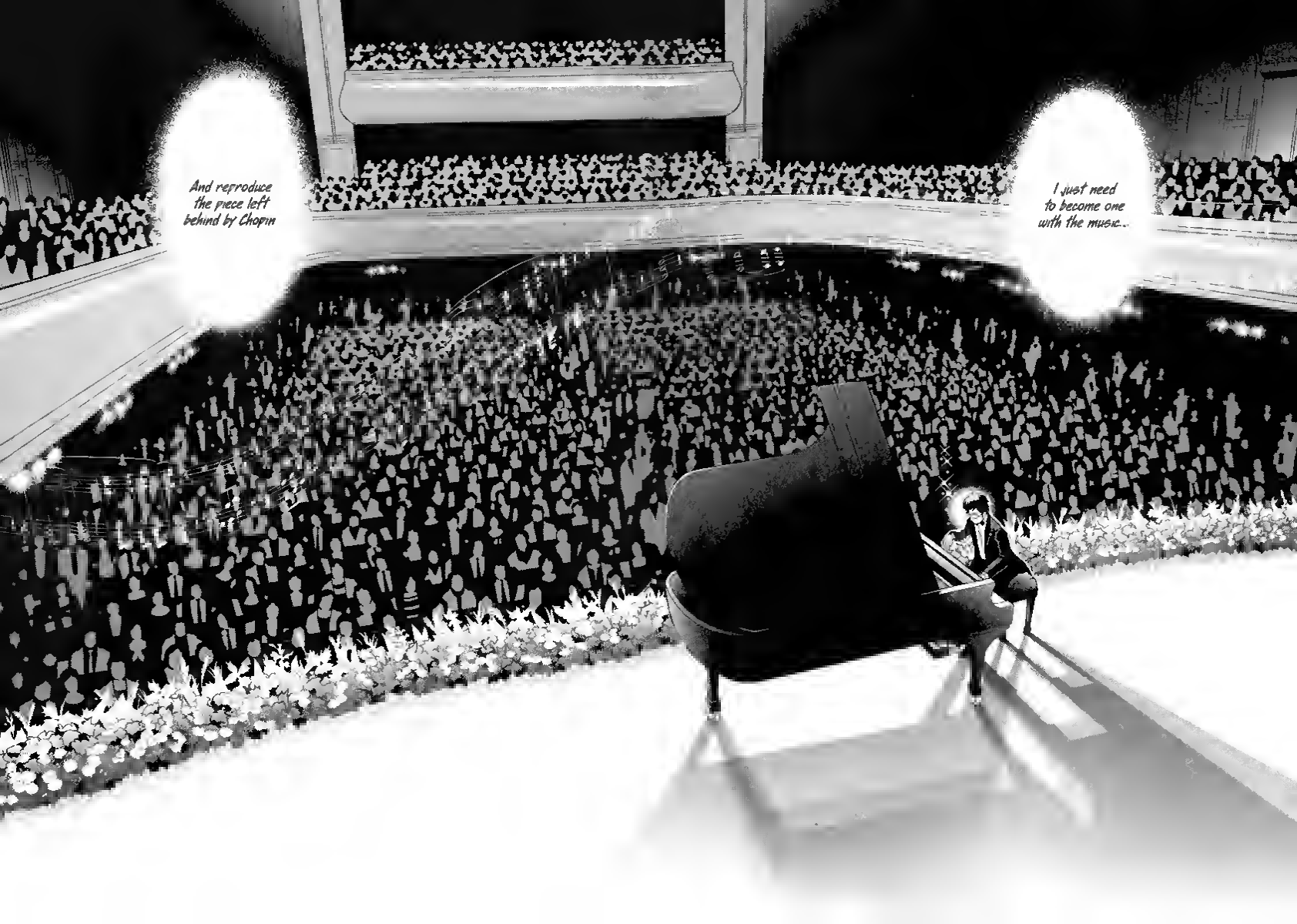
Contestant No. 2, Amamiya Shuhei

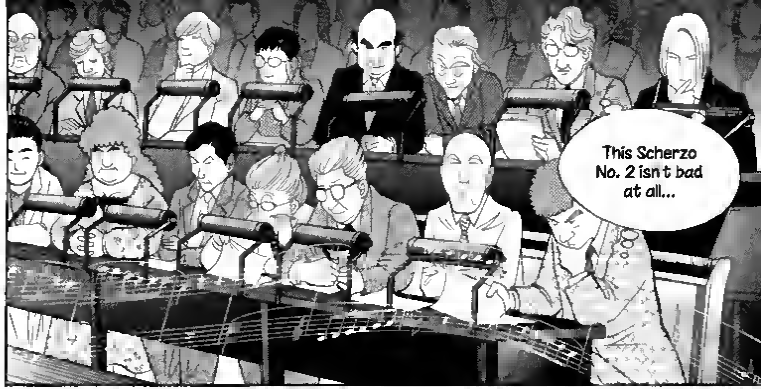
Think about how much practice I've done..
Just think...

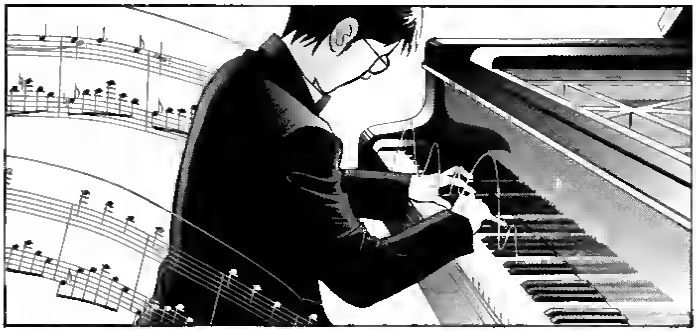
I feel as though there's nothing...
STEINWAY & SONS


Nothing left to fear

My playing wasn't magnificent enough
Someone once said that...
Once tormented me for days on end
Those words
It's too late to mull over...
But now,
すう
ふわ…
…


And reproduce the piece left behind by Chopin
I just need to become one with the music..


This Scherzo No. 2 isn't bad at all...



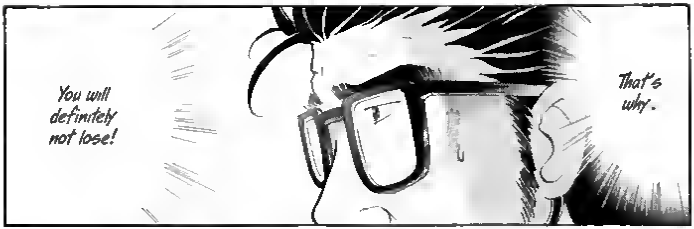
He is...
Amamiya Jr...

Oh...He is Amamiya Jr...

Amamiya Yoichiro's...
Only son.

Shuhei! You can do it!!
Shuhei!

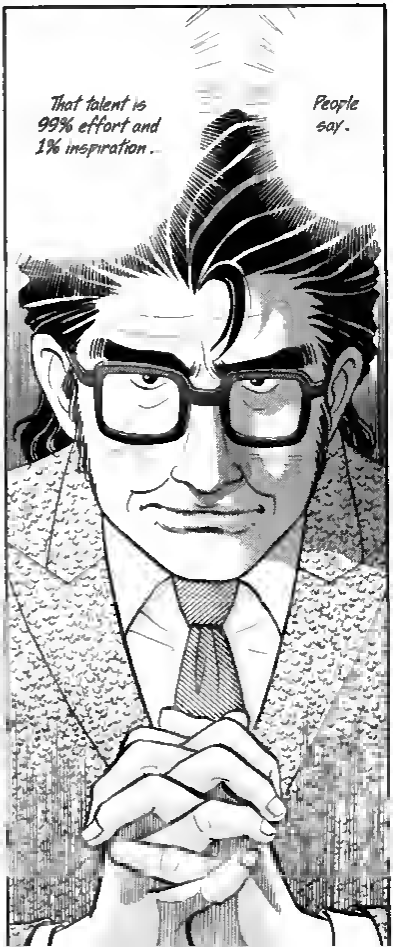
Have already worked harder than everyone else
You.
STEINWAY & SONS


You will definitely not lose!
That's why.

Ajino Sousuke!
Can you hear his playing?

Ichinose Kai!!

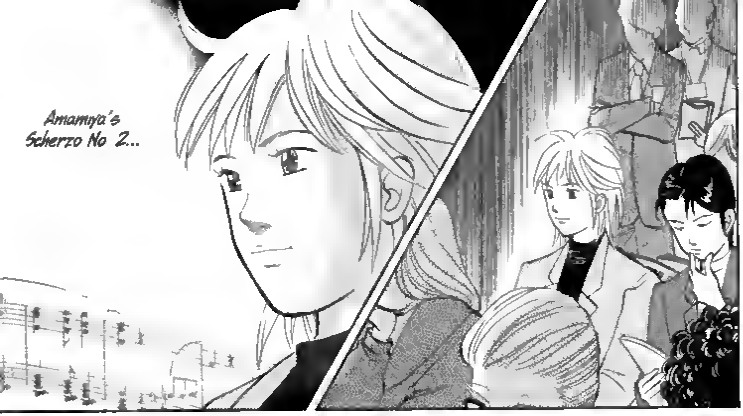
He has given 120% effort to reach this far
But Shuhei..


That talent is 99% effort and 1% inspiration.
People say.

That's something you...
Can't possibly do.
Sensei.

Will I be able to play like Kai and move people to tears?
Sensei... I...
Please tell me truthfully...
Don't worry about hurting me,
Should like your own playing, even more than you do now.
You...
Because your goal is to become a professional, I will tell you the truth,

I will wait.
He was so young at the time...
But he's already grown up.


Amamiya's
Scherzo No 2...

I have ever
heard...
Until now,
is the most
beautiful
Scherzo...

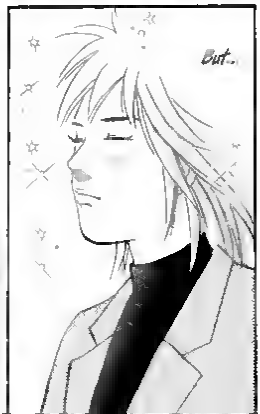
ほう
はあ…

The concert hall was filled with people ready to applaud
45 minutes.. Can he continue this quality of playing until the end.?
He is the youngest...
Amamiya Jr. isn't bad at all.
Next is Etude...
Yes! What an amazing performance!
Yoichiro.

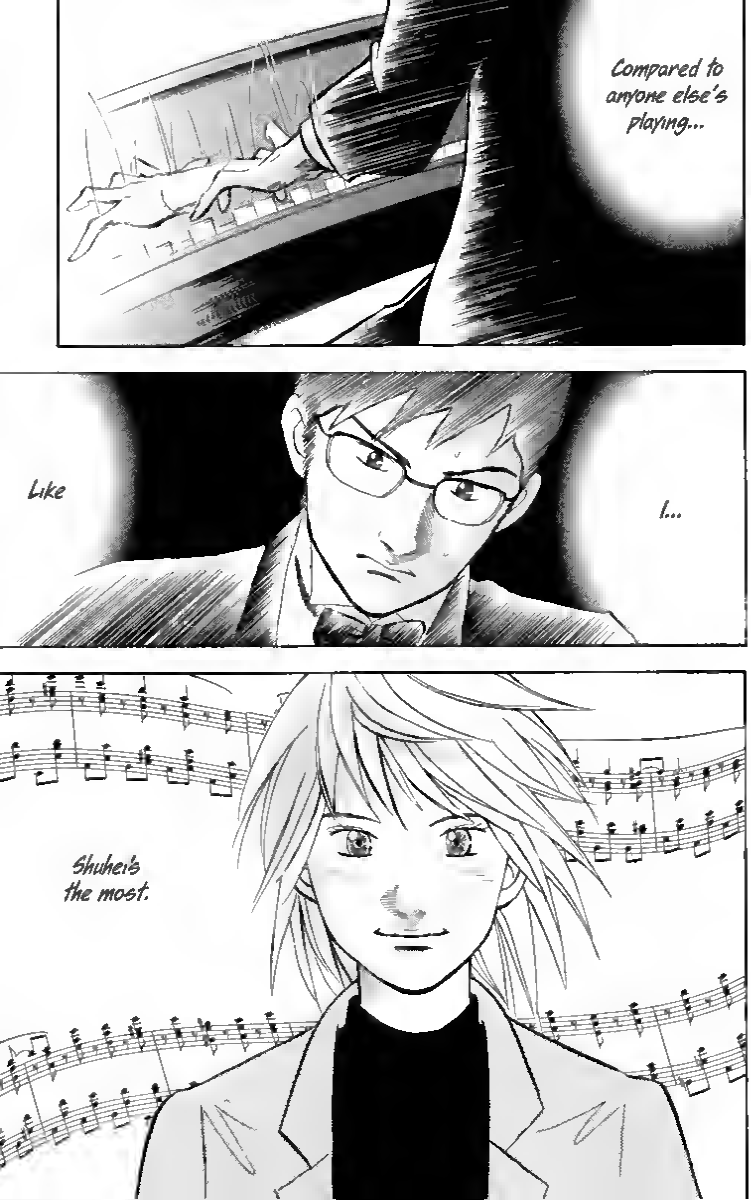
Everyone will praise his ..
First is the lively skipping of A minor Piece 25-4
Good techniques ..
Is this .
Is this the .
Amazing, Amamiya!
Powerful!

Fruit born from all your effort?

Just hard work wouldn't..
Not only that..

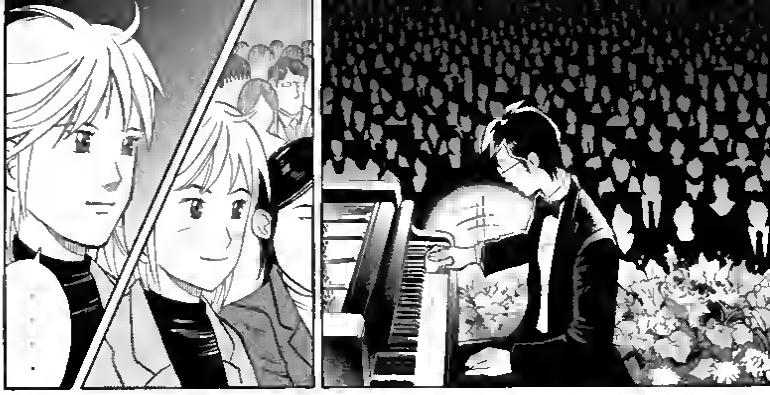

But..

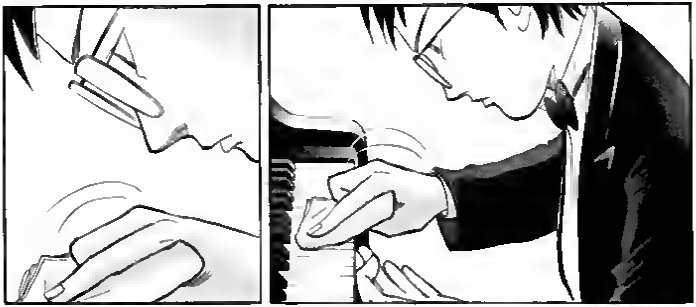
Amamiya...
I have only just realized that,
With the crystal clarity of sound
Make me feel so blessed.

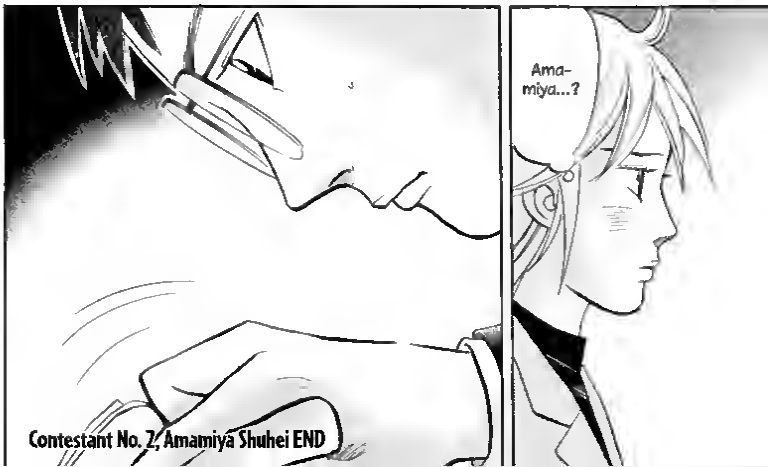

Compared to anyone else's playing...
Like
I...
Shuhei's the most.

The very most...

STEINWAY & SONS
Amazing! Not a note wrong!
Did he play a wrong note?
This is...very impressive.
"Winter Wind Etude".
Next is Etude in A minor, Piece 25-11...






Ama-
miya...?
Contestant No. 2, Amamiya Shuhei END

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by ISSHIKI Makoto
一色まこと

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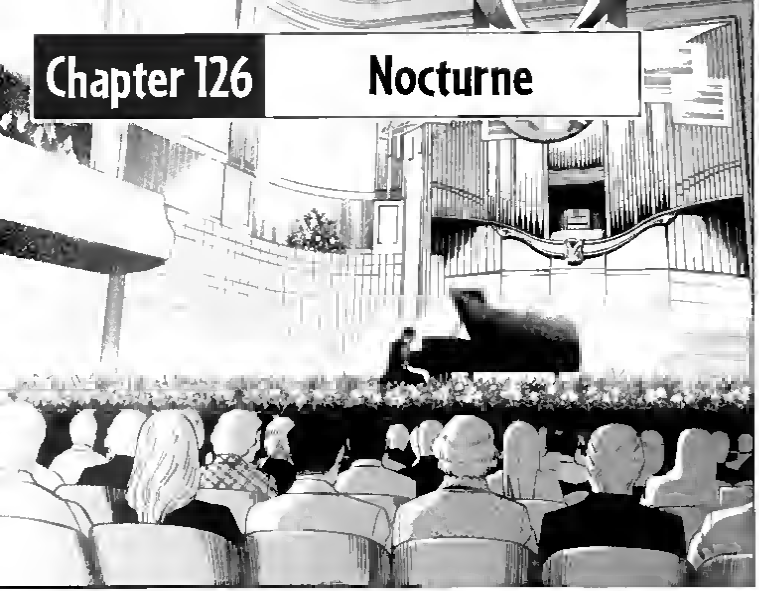
Chapter 126 Nocturne

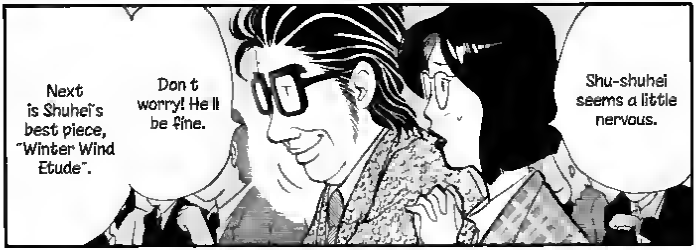


That s him, the youngest participant.
Yeah, Amamiya Jr.
He seems very occupied with the piano keys...

He's probably a little nervous,
I understand how he feels.
You think?

I've heard that Adamski has oily hands.
Ah... That's a possibility too.
The previous performer, Adamski, could have had oily hands.
He also used the Steinsway; and they haven't changed the piano since then.
Ad-adamski...
Ugh...

Ah...
Oh no, Chang Woo, he may have heard us...
Don't worry, that guy can't possibly understand Hangul.
S-s-s-same face!
Woah!
We are twins.
Haha...
NO.4
CHANG WOO AN
NO.3
CHANG SOO AN


Shu-shuhei seems a little nervous.
Don't worry! He'll be fine.
Next is Shuhei's best piece, "Winter Wind Etude".

S-s-sorry.
Flu?

How much oil did Adamski leave behind?

Really,
I didn't know such things could happen...

Amamiya

He played "Winter Wind Etude" excellently

Same for the waltz,

And lullaby

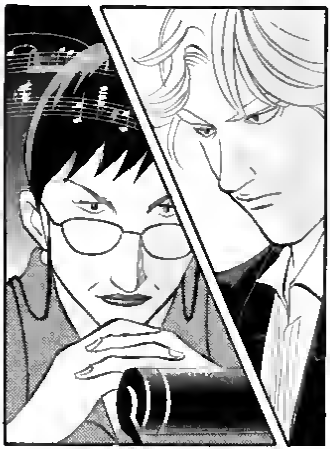
They were all played without a single mistake.
STEINWAY & SONS

But listening to his playing, it doesn't seem like there are any mistakes.
...

The fact that he wiped down the piano keys during each interval made me a little concerned...

Nocturne in C minor, Op 48-1.
The problem is the next piece..
What?
Nothing!
This guy..is very attentive of the piano keys..
Oily hands..
So.. How will he perform this next piece?
He has chosen a piece with a different style... a sad piece.
For Amamiya's next piece...

Nocturne No 13.
This piece expresses the suffering Jesus felt in a C minor to show misery



What misery does he know of..
Is he expressing the feelings that the Polish felt?
Seems like he isn't just a spoilt rich brat
Not a thought is about the suffering of Jesus or the misery of the Polish
As I perform this Nocturne,
Is one person...
All that is in my mind

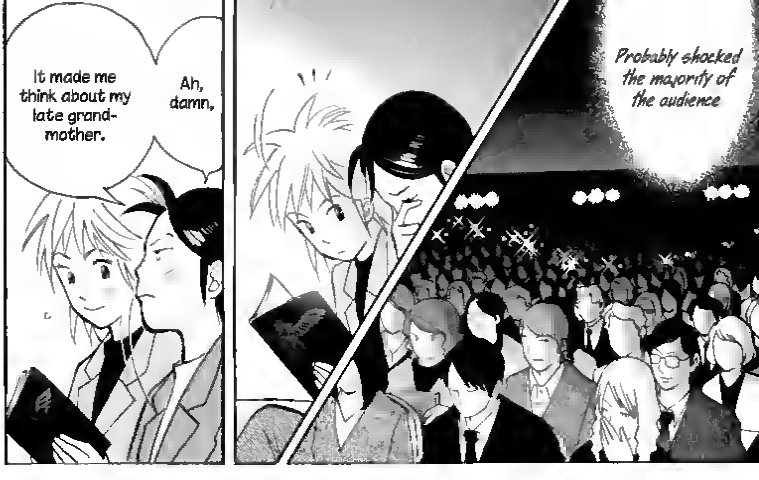
Yes, you!!
Ichinose Kai!

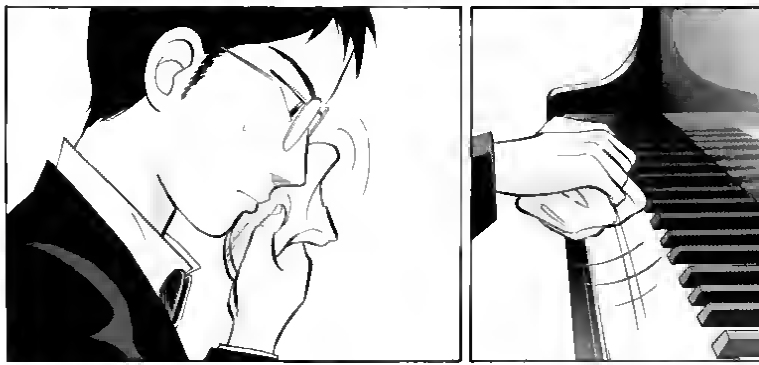
I met you when we were young...
You are my misery.
Kai,

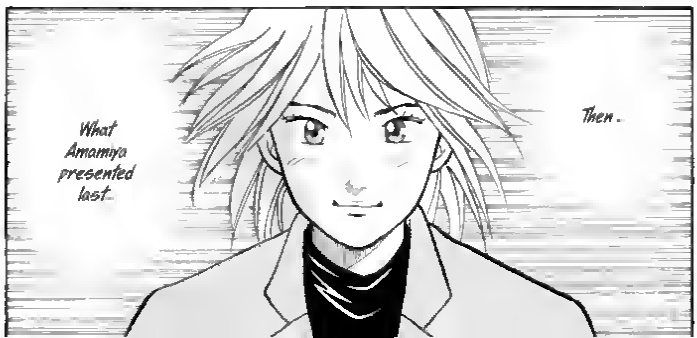
I had much faith in my own skills...
I felt that, if I never won against you, I would not have a future
No matter what, I could never win against you...
The feeling that...
This unescapable misery...

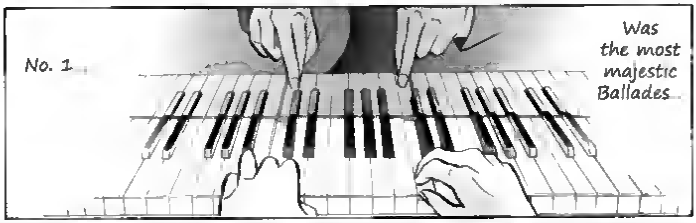
Kai...can you hear it?
Music from deep within my heart.
This is my

Amamiya's Nocturne...

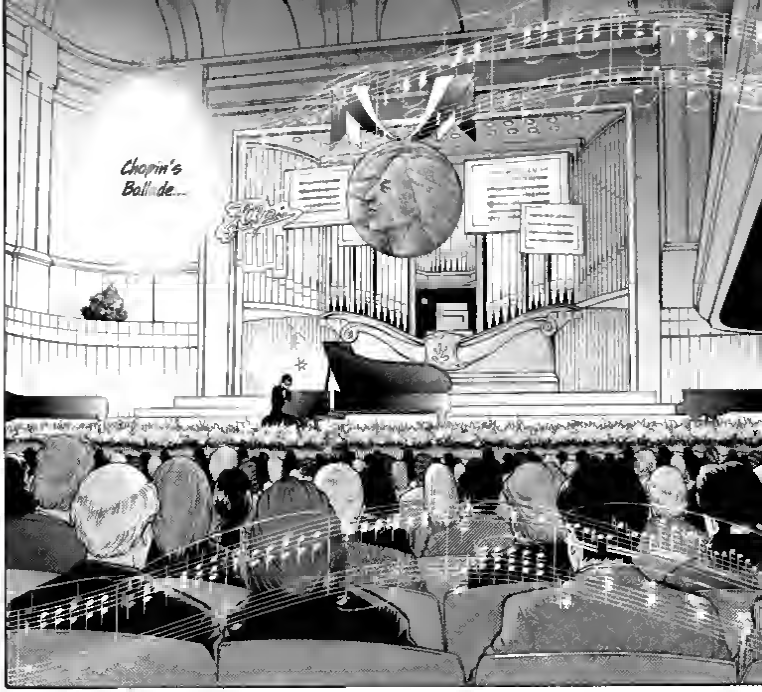

Ah, damn,
It made me think about my late grand-mother.
Probably shocked the majority of the audience

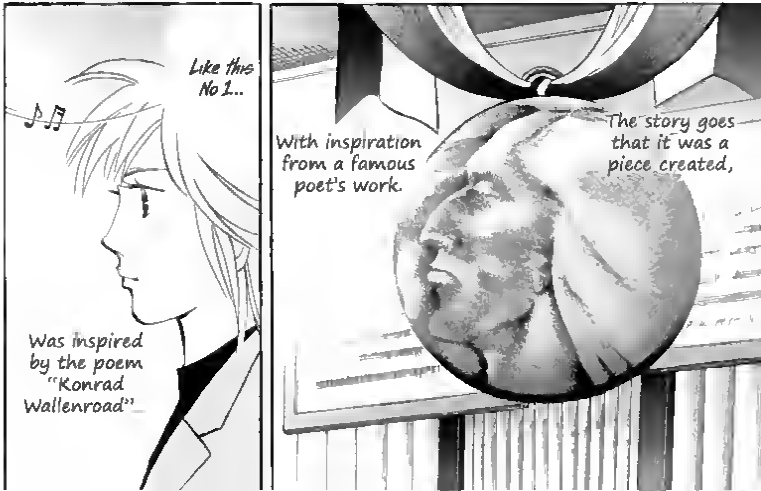



What Amamiya presented last...
Then.

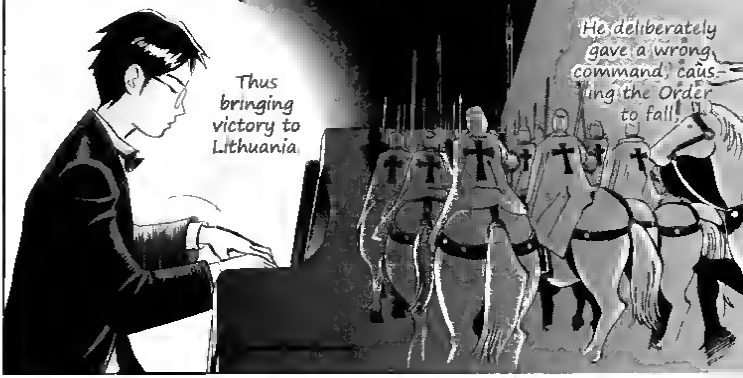

No. 1
Was the most majestic Ballades

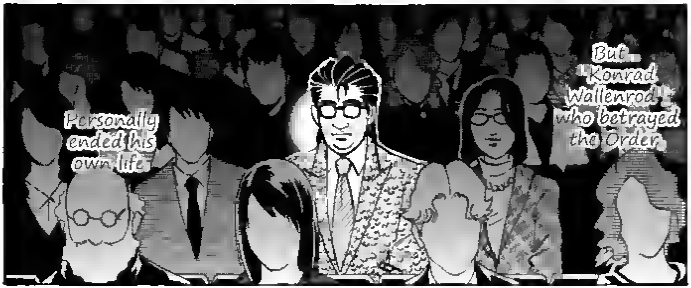
In G minor, Op. 23


Chopin's
Ballade...


Like this
No 1...
Was inspired
by the poem
"Konrad
Wallenroad"
With inspiration
from a famous
poet's work.
The story goes
that it was a
piece created,

Held hostage, he was adopted by the enemy's Grand Master
History told that During the battle in which Lithuania fell to the Order of Teutonic Knights, a teenager was taken away
T/N: "GRAND MASTER" IS THE TERM USED IN THE POEM. BASICALLY IT'S THE COMMANDER/CAPTAIN OF THE ORDER.
However, he escaped,
And return to Lithuania to fight for the freedom of his Motherland
And then.
He re-entered the Order, rising to the ranks of Grand Master,
Claiming to be "Konrad Wallenrod", the legendary Hero of the Order of Teutonic Knight,


Thus bringing victory to Lithuania
He deliberately gave a wrong command, causing the Order to fall!


Personally ended his own life
But... Konrad Wallenrod who betrayed the Order

Konrad Wallenrod committed suicide.

No, Dad

Wasn't he sentenced to death by the Order?
Eh, this story...

What's taught in Japan is that he was sentenced to death...
But after I came to Poland, I looked for the "original poem" and discovered that it was suicide.
Christianity teaches that suicide is a "sin", so it wasn't clearly stated.
But this explanation is the accurate one
However, it's difficult to understand the cause of death, so isn't Christianity's explanation on non-suicide natural?
No matter what explanation, there isn't much of a difference...
There is a difference.
Depending on the circumstances, feelings and characters, being sentenced to death or committing suicide are completely different!
But Chopin did not directly express the adapted version.
So I feel as though there is no need to follow the content when playing...

Dad!
I can't give up on this!
Plus, Konrad Wallenrod definitely committed suicide in the end.
You may be right... But I feel as though thinking in this way is easier.

To hear such a wonderful Ballode No. 1...
Shuhei... I now understand that you were right.

If I was in his position
Dad. It's because...

To end it myself.
I would have definitely chose

That was splendid, Amamiya!
Shuhei!!
Shuhei!

Under a full standing ovation...
Amamiya's first performance ended.
STEINWAY & SONS
Nocturne END

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by ISSHIKI Makoto
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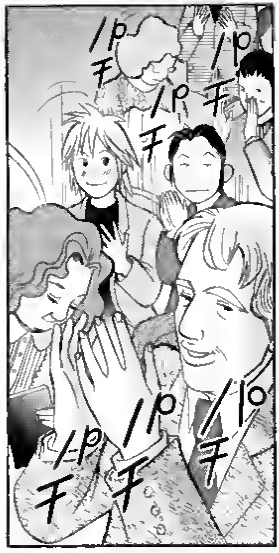
Chapter 127 What are you talking about?

Eh?!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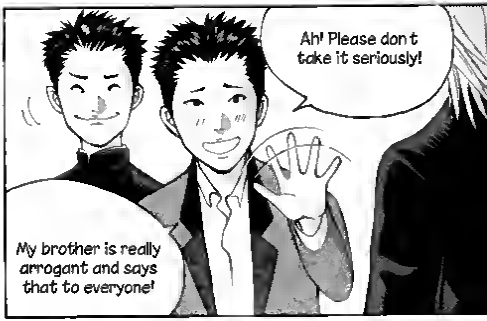
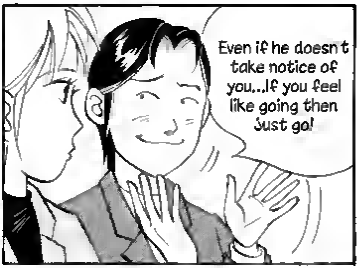

Ah! Please don't take it seriously!
My brother is really arrogant and says that to everyone!

I understand...

Hey! Aren't you going to congratulate him?

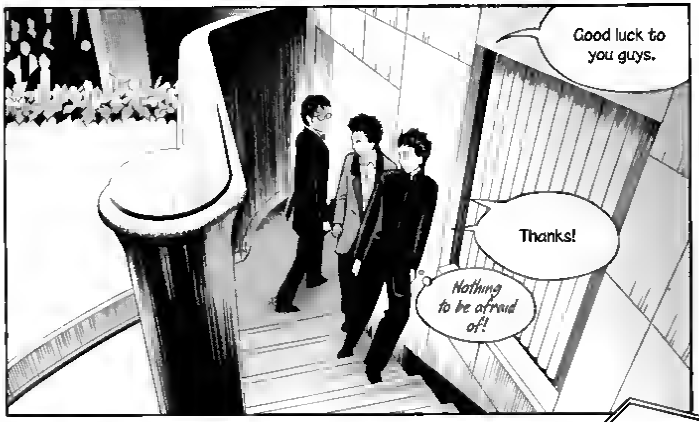
I won't go because up next is one of the An brothers!


Even if he doesn't take notice of you...If you feel like going then just go!

You're right, you're right! Besides, Amamiya is probably surrounded by the media and paparazzi; even if you go you won't be able to utter a single word.
Y-y-ye... Yes.

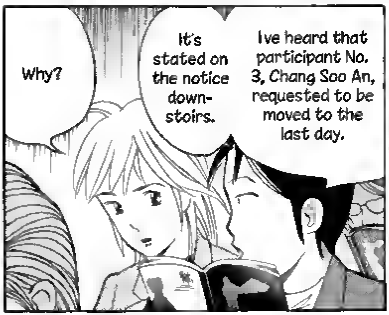
Was neither Adamski nor Amamiya, but the An brothers?
Before we entered, didn't Kousei clearly stress that today's highlight...

2
삐
삐
삐

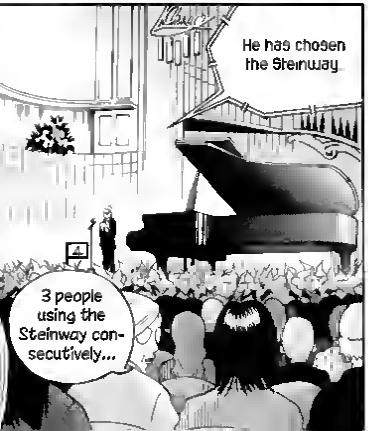

Good luck to you guys.
Thanks!
Nothing to be afraid of!

The next performer is participant No. 4,
Chang Woo An

From Korea!


Why?
It's stated on the notice down-stoirs.
I've heard that participant No. 3, Chang Soo An, requested to be moved to the last day.

The repertoire is
Eh? They skipped participant No. 3...


He has chosen the Steinway
3 people using the Steinway con-secutively...

Oh...So things like that happen...

It would be disadvanta-geous if their performances were back-to-back...
According to Tamakaji-sensei, twins tend to be grouped or compared to one another

No problem!
Look out for the oil on the piano!
Woo An,
4
4

I won t ever feel content.
I just feel slightly relieved.
Mr Amamiya!
As the youngest contestant, do you feel content with your wonderful performance?
What?
During every interval you seemed very occupied with the piano keys. Was there a problem with them?
Who's oily hands were you mindful of: the previous performer or your own?
....

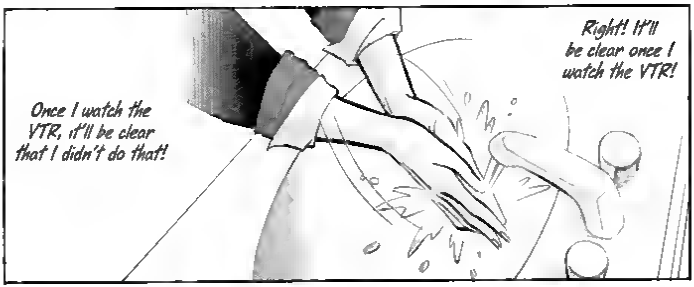
Um...I was probably just nervous.
Ah...
.....
.....
Shuhei you're amazing!
Who would have thought that you could have achieved so much?!
You did so well, Shuhei!
Shuhei!

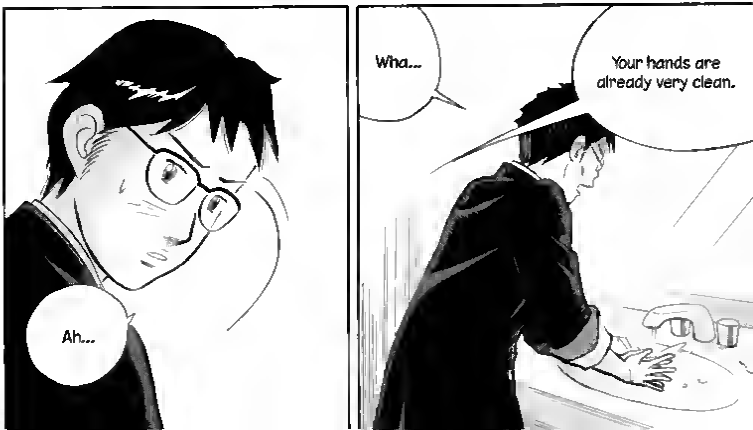
What's this..?
Eh?
But father said to not worry...
At first I was worried that you became nervous when I saw you wiping the piano keys frantically,
In a large-scale competition like this, surprises tend to accompany them.
Hahaha... these things do happen!
Could he possibly have token something to boost his energy?
He really knows how to cause problems.
Sigh...We've discussed this, it must have been Adamski's oily hands.
What is dad saying?
Surprises. What do you mean?
Surp-

Your performance was still really splendid. It's impossible to describe with words!
Inconveniences..
Even though inconveniences like this happen...
What's happening?!
I feel like I'm on cloud nine.
Really! I can't believe that was a performance by the youngest participant...
What..
We'll go have a feast later!
Then, I will wait downstairs!
I would like to go to the washroom...
D-d-dad, excuse me...

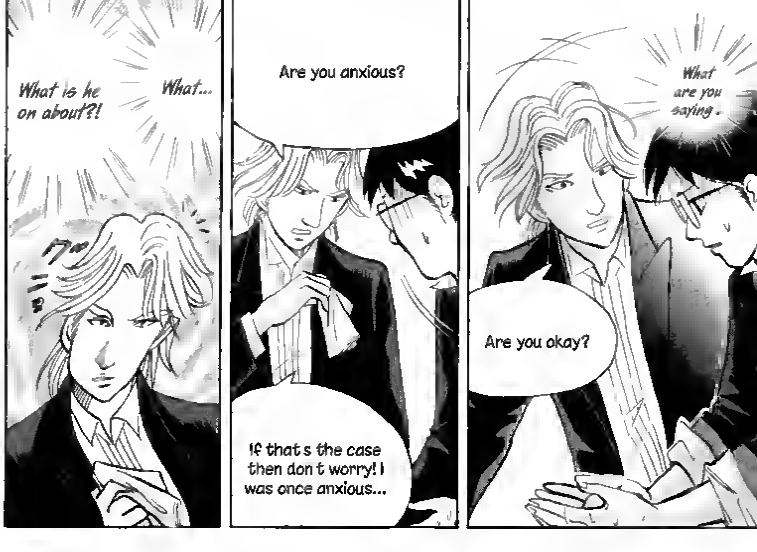
What's everyone talking about?!
What's happening?
Occupied with the piano keys?!
Frantically wiping down the keys ..?!

I wasn't occupied with the keys.
And I don't remember constantly wiping it


Right! It'll be clear once I watch the VTR!
Once I watch the VTR, it'll be clear that I didn't do that!


Ah...
Wha...
Your hands are already very clean.

Sorry I frightened you!
Adamski!!
ゴォ
What..
But the dirt on your hands has probably been washed off long ago...
Eh?
キュ
What are you saying, I've just only started washing!
ゴォ


What is he on about?!
What...
Are you anxious?
If that's the case then don't worry! I was once anxious...
What are you saying.
Are you okay?

Amamiya?!
What are you talking about? END

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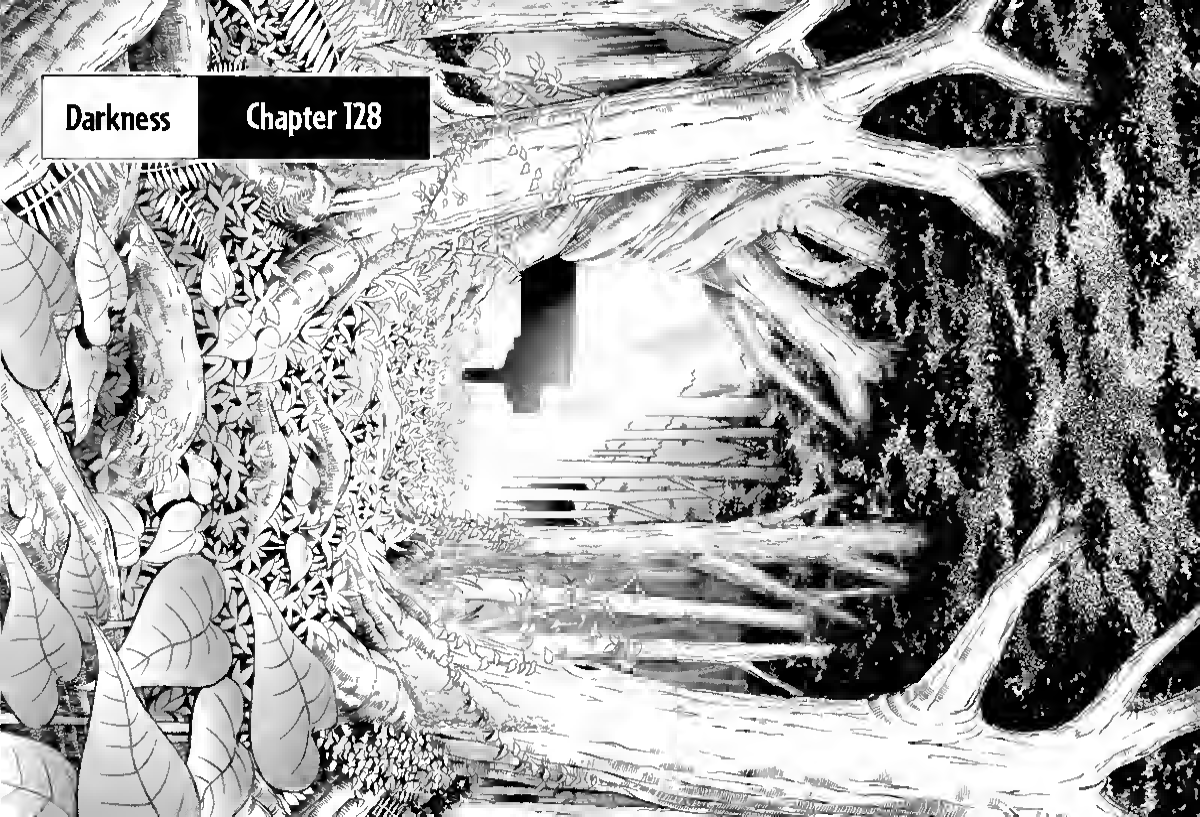

Darkness
Chapter 128

Hey!
Amamiya!?
You... Are you okay!?
I feel...
very uncomfortable...
Agg...
Again.
What's wrong with me...!?
Anywhere's fine...
I want to lie down...

If I shout for help... This fellow is a Japanese star, it could turn into a big scandal...
Trouble... Troublesome...
....
Even if you say you want to lie down...
I remember... there's an empty lounge upstairs...
Are you okay? Hold out a little longer.
Unauthorized personnel can't enter the top level, as long as I remain unseen by the media...

I'm falling into darkness again...
Again.
No!
No!
If I fall into the darkness, again, I will...

No,
I don't want to dream about it!
Have a nightmare of that piano in the forest.
Don't want to dream about it!!
It's true. If sensei goes to the forest at night, you will definitely hear it
What are you talking about?
Please stop!!
Even though that piano is broken, it can still make sounds!
It's true
Stop!

Because Kai goes there to play that piano every night.
How can such an absurd thing happen...
That piano that's abandoned in that forest, lost its sound a long time ago
If it's really possible...

Is it you?
The one... The one playing the piano...
Yes, sensei!
I am the one making this piano create sounds.
Then, do you want to play the piano with me!?

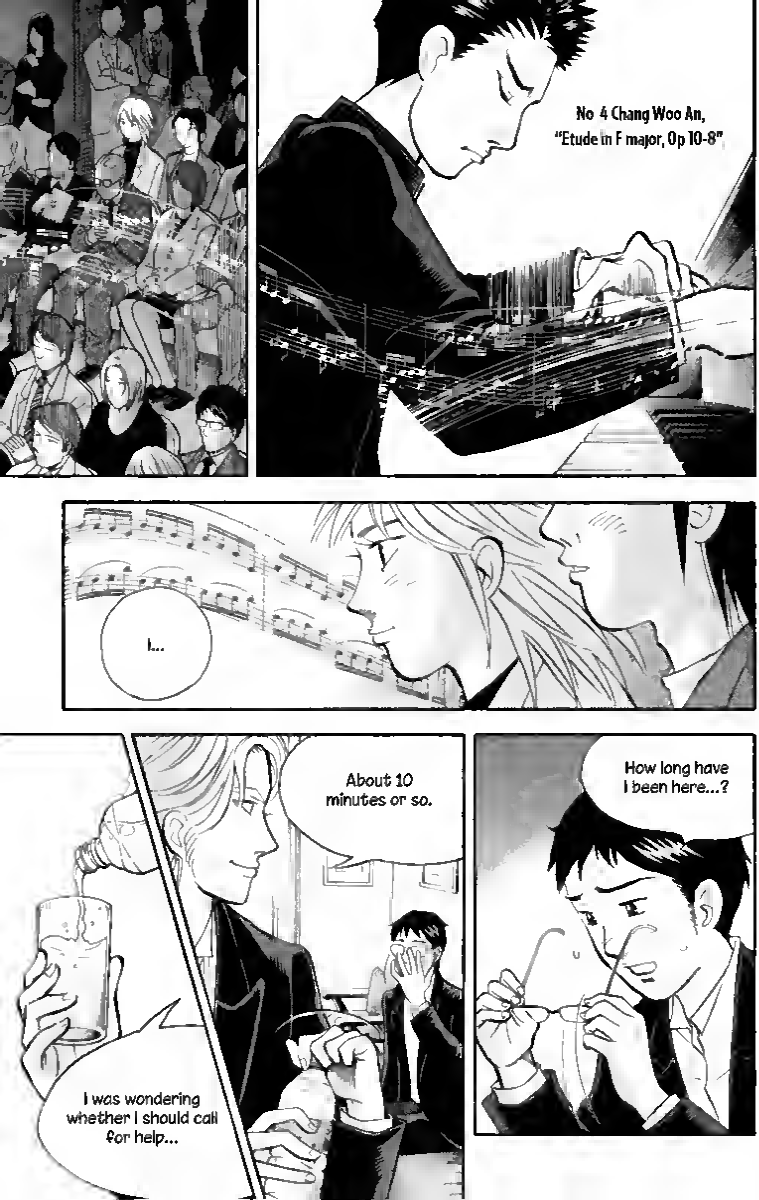
A piano is played by one person only, sensei!
Kai!
No!!
I'm the one playing the piano.
Sensei...
Sensei! Look at me!!
At that time...
If I hadn't told sensei about the forest...
Ajino sensei must have never formed ties with Kai.

Neither of them even talked about the piano's situation!
Both of them arguing...
If you can do it, we will agree to be your friends.
Go and play that haunted piano in the forest!
If I had not transferred to Kai's class...
Most importantly...
Why don't we go play the piano together!?
If I had rejected Kai's suggestion...
At least at that time...

And created an enemy, Ichinose Kai.
I made them meet...
they definitely wouldnt have formed ties
my strongest enemy!
I personally...
あああ

あああ
I personally...
I...
Hey!
Hey, are you okay!?
Great, you're awake.
This... This is...
Adamski...!?
!

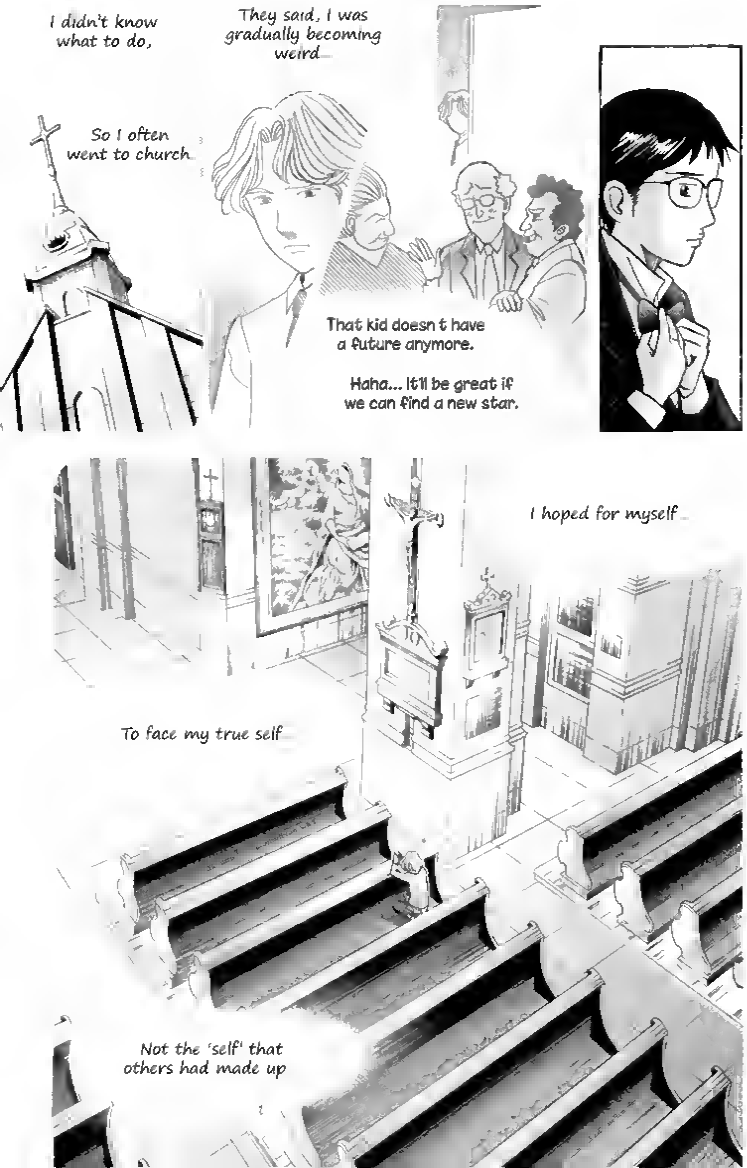
This is the lounge for performers.
I borrowed it because it was empty.
So Adamski was the one who brought me here!


No 4 Chang Woo An,
"Etude in F major, Op 10-8"
I...
About 10 minutes or so.
I was wondering whether I should call for help...
How long have I been here...?

Seems like you had a night-mare. Are you okay?
Thank god you didn't call for help.
I'm really grateful.
If you hadn't woken up after a while, I would've called for help.
Thank... Thank you.
Sorry, I'm okay again!
I'm just slightly anemic, sorry for troubling you...
There's water on my hands...
Ah...

That...
Don't stress yourself too much.
After coming here, if you can't accept the results in a relaxed manner...
Even if you say so...
I'm the same... Just focus on facing yourself, that's all you should do.
I think that's the only way to save you from your condition.
Relax...
Accept the result in a relaxed manner... I cannot agree to that.
It'll be hard to change your current condition.

I...
when I was young, I started acting high and mighty because I was called a prodigy.
What is he trying to say?
Just don't think about yourself as a great person,
then you'd most likely be fine.
Before I even noticed it, I started speaking arrogantly, and rejected others, only allowing those who praised me to stay by my side.
The adults looked up to me, and it made me feel like I was a king...
It was then, that I first heard negative comments about me.
But soon, it got hard to gather supporters...
Dad's waiting for me, this isn't the time to listen to his deep secrets...
Oh... Oh no...


I didn't know what to do,
They said, I was gradually becoming weird...
So I often went to church.
That kid doesn't have a future anymore.
Haha... It'll be great if we can find a new star.
I hoped for myself...
To face my true self
Not the 'self' that others had made up

My dad is an alcoholic, my mother has poor health and I have many siblings...

I was lucky to receive aid, and go to school...

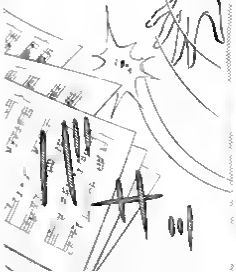
Although I made myself look like a kid from a rich family,

The truth is that my family is very poor.

Since concert tours are relaxing and allow me to make money,

I frequently skipped class.

I gradually came to resent this teacher...

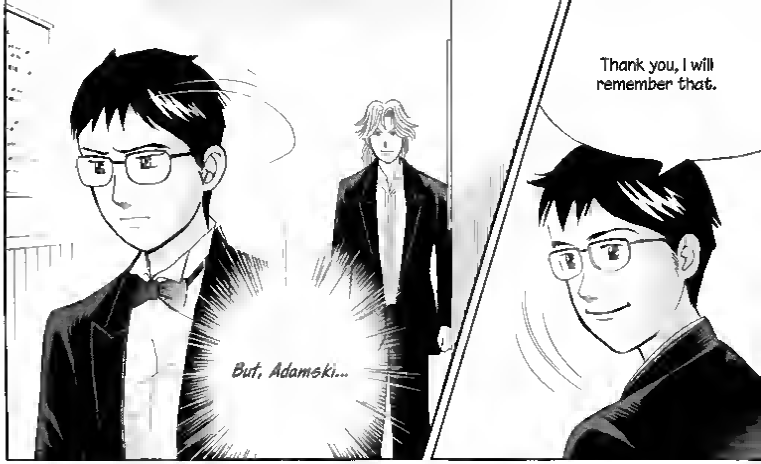


But I had a teacher who always scolded me for being lazy

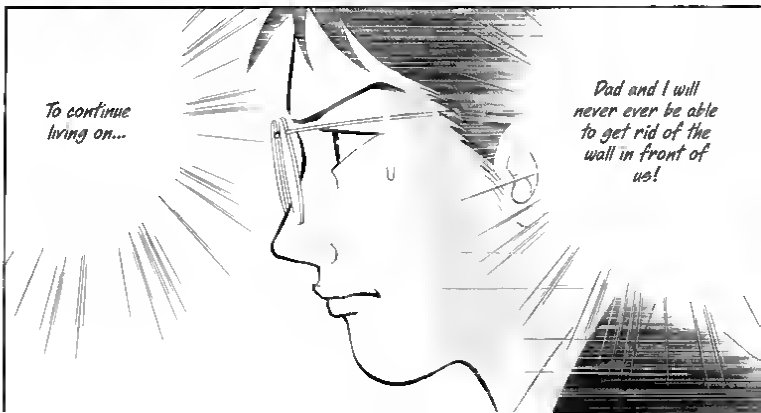
I don't want to become an adult like you!!
You're so terrible at this, teacher!!
My piano skills are even better than yours now, teacher!
I obviously had
A very important teacher.
yet I spoke to him arrogantly,
hurt him
and lost him

Things like these, if you don't stop for a moment, you won't realize it.
Luckily, I was able to realize it before completely losing myself.
I...
From the bottom of my heart, think I am the worst.
After that, I gradually corrected my ways.
I am still working hard to find the true me.
Thank... Thank you.
But I'm fine! Just too nervous, it's affecting my blood pressure.
Sorry Adameki, but I did not lose myself.
I'm different from you!
Oh, I see.

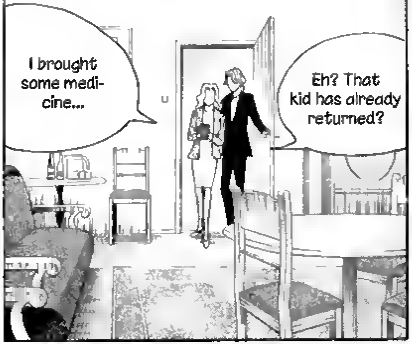
Adamski, I'm truly grateful for your help.
I have to go, someone's waiting for me...!
Ah... Amamiya, one more thing.
It could be unnecessary to say...
But don't ever think that there's no next time!
I am already 25 years old; it's my last chance...
You're still young...
If it's about the Chopin Competition; you still have another chance next time.
But it's different for you!


Thank you, I will remember that.
But, Adamski...

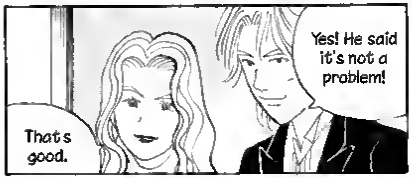
If I don't defeat Kai this time...
I don't have a next time.


To continue living on...
Dad and I will never ever be able to get rid of the wall in front of us!

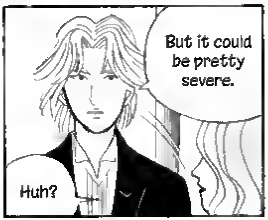
I was worried you got caught up by the media.
Sorry, I'm late.
Also for dad...
I will be able to complete it perfectly in one go!
I have no worries right now.
They headed to the restaurant first.
Where is everyone?
Haha... A little.
I will definitely tear down the wall before us!
Dad!


I brought some medicine...
Eh? That kid has already returned?

Karol!


Yes! He said it's not a problem!
That's good.

He definitely has talent...


But it could be pretty severe.
Huh?

But the darkness in his heart, might already be too deep.
Darkness END

The Perfect World of KAI

協力／下田幸二

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NDC 726　223p　19cm

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ピアノの森 14

二〇〇七年六月二十二日　第一刷発行
（定価はカバーに表示してあります）

著者　一色まこと
発行者　五十嵐隆夫
発行所　株式会社講談社
東京都文京区音羽二―一二―二一
郵便番号　一一二―八〇〇一
電話　編集部　東京（〇三）三九四五―九一五五
販売部　東京（〇三）五三九五―三六〇八

印刷所　共同印刷株式会社
製本所　株式会社　フォーネット社

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ISBN978-4-06-372610-7　Printed in Japan

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